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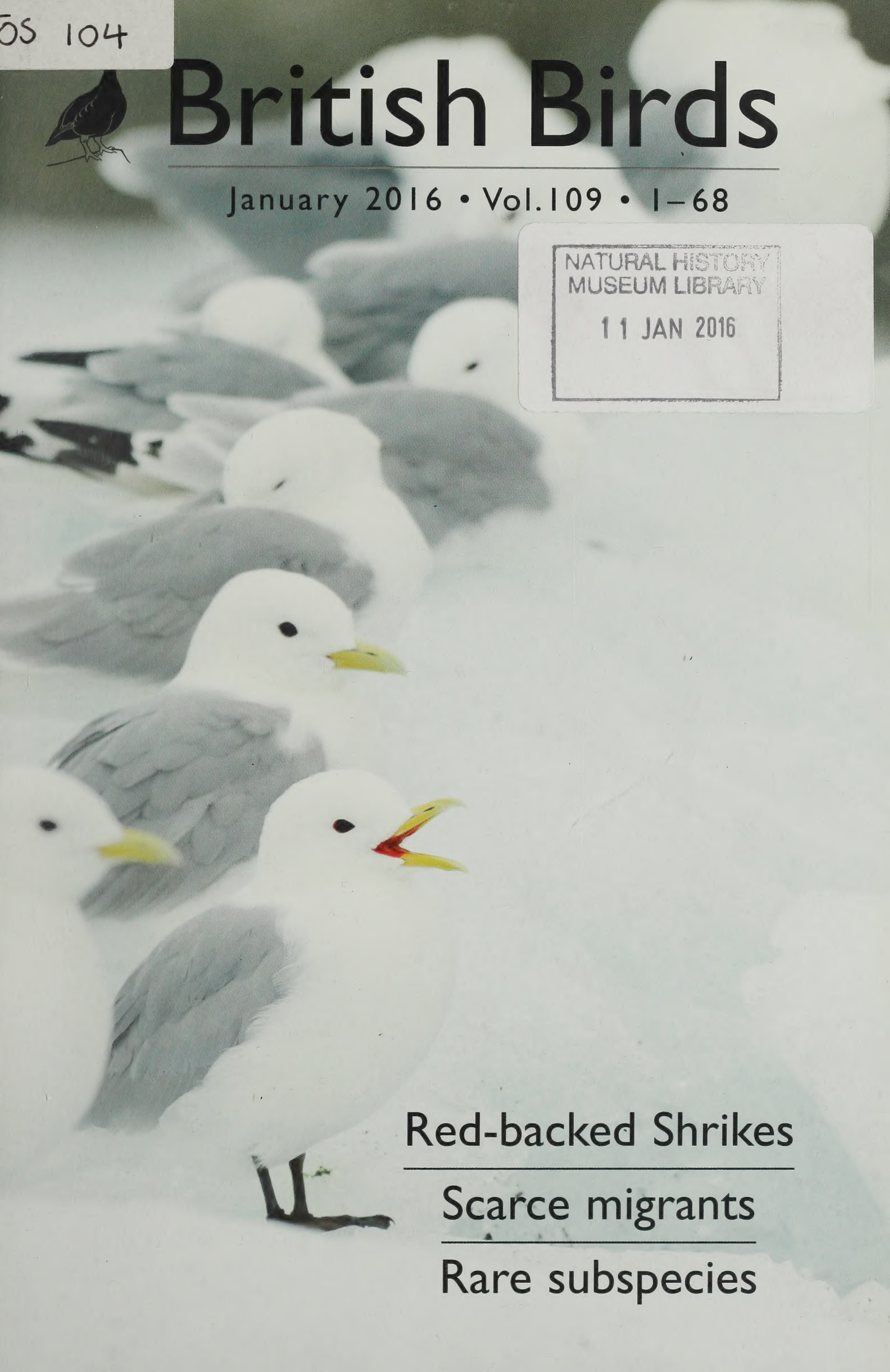

Red-backed Shrikes

Scarce migrants

Rare subspecies

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Front-cover photograph: Kittiwakes *Rissa tridactyla*, Svalbard, July 2013. Kittiwakes are now Red-listed in the UK because of drastic declines in the breeding population nationally, and now even the famous Tyne Kittiwakes are under attack (see p. 6). *Rebecca Nason*

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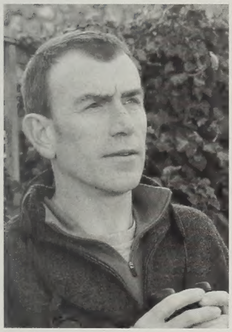

One of the highlights, perhaps the biggest highlight, of my birding year in 2015 was finding a pair of breeding Red-backed Shrikes in Shetland (plate 6), so the paper by Mary Davies and Leigh Lock examining some of the reasons behind the species' extinction as a breeding bird in the UK, and exploring the possibilities for some degree of recovery, is one I have been really keen to see in *BB*. Last summer, after the initial excitement of the discovery, it was immensely satisfying then to watch the birds bring off four chicks successfully. And, correspondingly, one of the nastiest moments of the birding year came when, during an early morning visit to the area a couple of weeks after the young fledged, I was confronted by a cat carrying a juvenile shrike in its jaws. The incident ended relatively well, given that the cat dropped the shrike in response to a purely verbal attack, and the shrike flew off – shaken but intact. A *BB* eye, or a longer piece, on cats, their impact on certain bird populations and what we might realistically do about it is something I am still mulling over. Predation is unlikely to have been a significant factor in the loss of breeding Red-backed Shrikes in this country, but there are some species and situations – ground-nesting seabirds on islands, for example – in which cats manifestly have an impact at the population level.

A very happy new year to all our readers; and I hope that 2016 brings you all some birding highlights to look back on like those shrikes were for me.

Roger Riddington

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British Birds aims to: ❖ provide an up-to-date magazine for everyone interested in the birds of the Western Palearctic; ❖ publish a range of material on behaviour, conservation, distribution, ecology, identification, movements, status and taxonomy as well as the latest ornithological news and book reviews; ❖ maintain its position as the journal of record; and ❖ interpret scientific research on birds in an easily accessible way.

BB eye

Getting your lists in order

Imagine: you're planning a trip to eastern Europe in spring and you want to swat up on the distribution and ID criteria of Pied *Ficedula hypoleuca* and Collared Flycatchers *F. albicollis*. In the *Collins Bird Guide* they are, as you expected, after the warblers. Looking for a bit more detail, you find *BWP* is the same. But then, broadening the search, you turn to *HBW*; and their online option has bird families in a quite different order! After warblers, you find babblers, nuthatches and treecreepers, not flycatchers; they are immediately after thrushes, and *before* warblers in the sequence presented. OK, it's easy to find families quickly online. Not really a problem? But why the difference?

Turning to *BB* for some reassurance, in the most recent BBRC report, Collared Flycatcher is in the *middle* of the thrushes and chats section. The *BB* List of Western Palearctic Birds (http://britishbirds.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/BB-list-2015.pdf) confirms this. The *Ficedula* flycatchers are slotted in among various chats like Robin *Erithacus rubecula* and Common Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*. Yet Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata* is after the thrushes but before Robin. Surveying a range of field guides and other books just adds to the variety – and the confusion.

Many *BB* readers will recognise the issue, but perhaps not be too surprised about this, since they will have seen many changes in the sequence of bird species in the last decade or so. The three breeding bird atlases, each produced 20 years apart, show how much the sequence can change across even quite short timescales. Twelve years ago this month, *BB* readers found that the comfortingly familiar 'Voous' order that had seemed almost set in stone for so long had changed. Now, the list began with wildfowl and gamebirds rather than divers and grebes (*Brit. Birds* 97: 2–5). That change followed the recommendations of the BOU Taxonomic Sub-committee. At the time this seemed all very disruptive but field guides and bird reports now largely follow this sequence and, arguably, we have got used to it.

But that big change turned out to be just the beginning, with almost annual changes in the sequence of species within families and families within orders. In 2007, there was another big shuffle, this time in the sequence of families within Passeriformes. And in 2012, the falcons were no longer to be found after the other birds of prey but next to parrots at the very end of the non-passerine families. Madness?!

Like many, my first bird book was the *Observer's Book of Birds*. As a newcomer to the hobby, I struggled to find birds in this book so was forever using the index. Back then I was unfamiliar with bird families and how they related to each other. That understanding came with time and experience. The introduction to the Observer's guide stated that there was 'now a trend internationally to adopt what is called the Wetmore order of classification' – a system adopted by the BOU in 1952. The main purpose was to 'place families which are presumed to be closely related near to one another and to place more primitive families near the beginning of the list with the more advanced near the end'. Thus began the long-established sequence beginning with divers and grebes and ending with buntings and sparrows, although a revision in 1977 by Karel Voous later became the standard and was used by *BB*.

Perhaps we had been lulled into a false sense of security. From the late 1970s through to 2004 we had a largely static list; all the controversy was about what common names we should use, rather than in what sequence they should appear. But it is easy to forget that the list of British birds was by no means static beforehand. Pick up a bird book from the early twentieth century and you would see the crows and then other passerines at the beginning, with rails and gamebirds at the end.

Although the sequence now in use would be almost unrecognisable to Dr Wetmore or Prof. Voous, the principles are still the same. Recent advances in genetic analysis have greatly changed our knowledge of what is primitive and what isn't. One of the implications of these frequent and disruptive changes is that publications become dated and birdwatchers, especially new ones, find it very confusing. It means that editors and compilers of lists have to decide whether to change or just ignore it all and freeze their lists at some point in the past.

Another implication is that any numbering system based on the recommended sequence becomes useless once that sequence changes. Before the widespread use of computers for bird recording, this mattered less. The number was just a unique identifier for a particular species. The Euring system, developed in 1963 to organise and standardise European bird ringing, provided the first widespread standard numbering system and helped to ensure that files of species data could be stored in such a way to guarantee the correct sequence. But as taxonomic changes have come along, renumbering on a regular basis has become necessary and there is now no standard.

I maintain that when you pick up a field guide or a county bird report, or browse one of the regular reports in *BB*, you should have a reasonable idea of where a species might be without the need to use an index. And you shouldn't need to know when the book or report was published in order to know where to look. The same principle applies to filling in a recording sheet for a survey such as WeBS or submitting records to a scheme such as BirdTrack. Of course, Ctrl-F is the obvious way to find anything in this digital age, but paper is not disappearing as fast as we might have thought.

One solution sometimes put forward to resolve these issues is to forget the taxonomic arrangements and just sequence birds alphabetically. But this really wouldn't work. Would you find Common Pochard *Aythya ferina* under 'P' or 'C'? Or indeed 'A'. (Fan-tailed Warbler *Cisticola juncidis* or Zitting Cisticola, anyone?)

Should we just accept that, in the spirit of Wetmore's guiding principles, there will be amendments to the taxonomic sequence each year, or in most years? I have an interest in current taxonomic thinking but I don't think we should. Perhaps the problem is the conflict between taxonomists using robust science to determine the best sequence (known so far), which produces new results ever more frequently, and the impact that has on the end users, many of whom are just birdwatchers reading scientific journals and bird reports.

I wonder instead if some kind of moratorium on list-sequence changes could be instigated. New species could be added to lists, of course, but the order in which they appeared would remain static for (say) a decade, and then all the recommenced sequence changes could be implemented at one time. The reason behind each change could still be published by the BOU annually as now. But books, bird reports, online lists and *BB* itself would not make any amendments until the agreed date. The BOU has been working towards establishing a unified European-wide taxonomic model but as this has proved impossible it decided that this aspiration would be better achieved by disbanding its own Taxonomic Sub-committee (see www.bou.org.uk/british-list/taxonomy). Instead they will be reviewing the available global taxonomies with a view to adopting one system for all BOU activities, including the British List. Perhaps during this hiatus the European committees could also agree on a new but stable list for 2020–29?

Most of what I have said relates to the taxonomic sequences of birds of the Western Palearctic used in British and some European publications. But across the world there are four main taxonomies adopted by other organisations and in different countries: Clements, HBW Alive/BirdLife International, Howard and Moore and the International Ornithological Congress (www.worldbirdnames.org); the IOC list is the one currently used by BOU and hence *BB*. It is too much to ask that all of these might remain static for ten years at a time too? Perhaps by 2020 there could be one global sequence which will last for a whole decade!

Mark Holling

News and comment

Compiled by Adrian Pitches

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of *British Birds*

Refusal of Buzzard cull ruled unlawful

How will we look back on 2015 in years to come? Will it prove to be the watershed year when 60 years of bird protection law began to be unravelled – in the UK and in Europe?

Following a shameful catalogue of persecution of birds of prey during 2015 (see below), the High Court has hammered another nail in the coffin of legal protection for Britain's raptors. We reported last January (*Brit. Birds* 108: 7) that a Northumberland gamekeeper had won a judicial review of Natural England's decision to refuse him a licence to kill Common Buzzards *Buteo buteo* that were allegedly preying on Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus* poults in his release pens.

Richard McMorn, from Ancroft near Berwick, is a self-employed gamekeeper who ran small-scale shoots in the north of Northumberland. In 2013, Natural England secretly granted him a licence to destroy Buzzard eggs and nests to 'protect a Pheasant shoot'. Emboldened by this, McMorn then made four more licence applications in 2013 – to shoot 16 Buzzards and three Eurasian Sparrowhawks *Accipiter nisus*. NE refused those applications – and another application in 2014 to shoot ten Buzzards.

It was the inconsistent approach of NE that was challenged in the judicial review hearing in June when McMorn (backed financially by the National Gamekeepers' Organisation) went to the High Court. The court decision was published in November when Mr Justice Ouseley ruled that NE had indeed been inconsistent and that licences to 'control' birds of prey faced a far higher threshold for acceptance than any other group of birds. Indeed, no licence has been granted to date to kill a bird of prey.

The judge ruled that NE had acted unlawfully because 'NE treated raptors differently from other wild birds because of the public controversy which the granting of a licence for the killing of Buzzards, to prevent serious damage to a Pheasant shoot, would engender, or because of perceived adverse public opinion.' You can see the full ruling on the Raptor Persecution Scotland website at: http://bit.ly/1Z4Mf0o

However, it was a pyrrhic victory for McMorn as his shooting businesses have failed, rendered unviable, he claims, by Buzzard predation on his poults. Lindsay Waddell, Chairman of the National Gamekeepers' Organisation, said: 'This judicial review was never about changing the law. Buzzards, although now very common, remain fully protected birds and the wildlife licensing system quite rightly has safeguards to ensure that there cannot be a "free for all" against them. Rather, the case was about seeking the court's view on whether the existing licensing system was being fairly administered by NE. The court found that it was not.'

Of course, many gamekeepers do just that – pursuing, illegally, a 'free for all' against Buzzards and other raptors, as the frequent court reports in N&c demonstrate. And in future, armed with a 'licence to kill' by an understandably more cautious and pliant NE, what monitoring system will be put in place to ensure that they take only their quota of 10 Buzzards, rather than carry on killing 20 or 30 more?

Peregrine shot in Durham

Durham Police and the RSPB are appealing for information about a Peregrine Falcon *F. peregrinus* found shot in Co. Durham. The dead bird was found on the southeast edge of Stang Forest, near the Yorkshire border, on 23rd August by a member of the public. Post-mortem examination confirmed that the bird died as a consequence of being shot.

This incident is just the latest in a series of crimes against birds of prey in Co. Durham in 2015. In March, two shot Short-eared Owls *Asio flammeus* were found near Selset Reservoir (*Brit. Birds* 108: 706), and in June another shot Peregrine was discovered at Castle Lake, Bishop Middleham.

PCSO Elizabeth Finn of Durham Police said: 'It beggars belief that in 2015 a bird of this status has been shot and killed.' RSPB Investigations Officer, Howard Jones, commented: 'This case once again provides a window into the reasons behind the Peregrine's struggle to breed in much of the English uplands. Illegal persecution continues to limit the breeding success of this species in the uplands, in stark contrast to the bird's successful recovery in the lowlands.'

Red-footed Falcon gunned down in Cambridgeshire

The apparent upsurge in raptor persecution in 2015 (and the corpses recovered are clearly only a small fraction of those birds killed) included one high-profile bird that had delighted birders for much of the summer.

A male Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus*, which had spent a month outside a colliery in Staffordshire and then moved to a Lincolnshire fen, was found shot dead in Cambridgeshire in September. The RSPB released the news – and offered a £1,000 reward to find the perpetrator – in late November following post-mortem confirmation of gunshot in the corpse.

RSPB Senior Investigations Officer Mark Thomas said: 'The death of this beautiful and rare bird is sickening. It has spent nearly three months touring the UK and delighting thousands of people only to be shot dead in Cambridgeshire.'

Our friends at Rare Bird Alert have asked birders to top up the reward fund and a further £2,600 has already been raised. www.rarebirdalert.co.uk/v2/Content/Crowd_out_Wildlife_Criminals.aspx?s_id=1070638165

RSPB-images

1. The Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus* corpse – the same individual was featured alive and well in plate 317 of last September's *BB*.

Birdcrime 2015 – and 2014

It was indeed a grim year for raptor persecution in 2015. The high-profile 'disappearance' of no fewer than five nesting male Hen Harriers *Circus cyaneus* from moorlands in northwest England was the headline event (*Brit. Birds* 108: 369), but besides the incidents listed above three Red Kites *Milvus milvus* from the Gateshead reintroduction scheme were found poisoned in northeast England. Another casualty was the fourth Little Bustard *Tetrax terax* of the 2014/15 influx, found shot in Norfolk in January and never to appear on any birder's list.

However, there was *some* good news: despite the loss of five Hen Harrier nests in 2015, a further six pairs did breed successfully in northern England with 18 young fledged (*Brit. Birds* 108: 502).

The full bird-crime statistics for 2015 will be collated and published later this year, while the statistics from 2014 were published by the RSPB in November. *Birdcrime 2014* detailed 179 reports of shooting and destruction of birds of prey including the confirmed shooting of 34 Buzzards, nine Peregrines, three Red Kites and a Hen Harrier. The report also documents 72 reported incidents of wildlife poisoning and pesticide-related offences. Confirmed victims of poisoning include 23 Red Kites, nine Buzzards and four Peregrines.

Notable incidents in 2014 included the discovery of 16 Red Kites and six Buzzards found dead near Inverness, of which 12 of the Red Kites and four Buzzards were proved to have been poisoned. And England's worst-ever raptor poisoning case concluded in 2014, when Norfolk gamekeeper Allen Lambert received a suspended prison sentence for a range of offences including the poisoning of ten Buzzards and a Sparrowhawk. It was revealed in November that the Stody Estate, where Lambert had worked, was docked €260,000 (£188,000) in farm subsidy payments by the Rural Payments Agency as a result of the poisoning incident.

You can read *Birdcrime 2014* here: www.rspb.org.uk/Images/birdcrime_2014_tcm9-410409.pdf

New Finance Director for *BB*

The longest-serving director of BB 2000 Ltd, Ian Packer, stood down at the December 2015 board meeting after almost 14 years as our Finance Director. During this time, Ian's business and financial skills have helped to steer *BB* into the calmer waters of a healthy financial position, which in turn provided the platform for a thriving journal. We thank him for his unstinting service. And we welcome in his stead Chris Spooner as our new Finance Director. Chris, who carries out a similar role for the African Bird Club, already has his feet under the table and has contributed the following item too.

What happens to my bird books when I'm gone?

Following on from the debate that took place in 2015 about what to do with your notebooks and records (started in April by Moss Taylor's *BB* eye – *Brit. Birds* 108: 186–187), it's a question that many *BB* readers have probably been asking themselves, as Chris Spooner articulates: 'The first serious bird book I purchased was a used copy of Richard Kearton's *British Birds' Nests*, which has gilt edges and excellent egg plates. I was 11 years old, a committed but fortunately largely unsuccessful egg-collector, and paid the (then) princely sum of seven shillings and sixpence [37.5 pence in 'new money'] for what is still one of my favourite books.

'Since then, like many birders of my age, I have built a large and eclectic library of old and contemporary bird books and, as my children do not share my interest, I am left wondering what to do with my collection when I eventually "pop my clogs".

'The Victorians, as inveterate collectors, were able to leave their large houses – and their libraries – to their heirs or to local libraries and museums, which were fashionable at the time and keen for content. Unfortunately, nowadays many local libraries have closed and those that do exist are very short of space.

'In conversation with others of my generation, I realise that I am not alone, with the majority considering leaving their collections to birding charities. While a keen supporter of several charities, I am conscious that if I gifted my books they would be sold off, as charities have neither the space nor the inclination to maintain a library.

'While I should not really care what happens after my death, I do have an emotional attachment to a collection I have built up over 55 years, which travelled with me to the USA and back, and is my most treasured possession. I write this in the hope that someone has a brilliant suggestion – but more in the expectation that other *BB* readers have similar sentiments…'

Tyne Kittiwakes under threat from luxury hotel

They are famously the most inland nesting Kittiwakes *Rissa tridactyla* in the world – a growing colony nesting on the iconic Tyne Bridge, 15 km inland from the North Sea coast. The pioneers first nested on quayside buildings in the early 1960s and there are now over 1,000 breeding pairs on structures including the bridge and the Baltic art gallery.

But now this urban wildlife spectacle is under threat from a planning application which aims to prevent them from nesting. The Vermont Hotel has taken over the building adjacent to the north abutment of the Tyne Bridge and has converted it into hotel apartments. This development was carried out in the full knowledge that there was a large Kittiwake colony nesting alongside. The Vermont Hotel has now submitted a planning application to Newcastle City Council to prevent Kittiwakes from nesting on three sides of the bridge abutment. (This year 116 pairs of Kittiwakes nested on these three sides.) The hotel has applied to use netting, sloping ledges and electronic devices (an 'avishock system') to prevent the Kittiwakes nesting in 2016. (The application is available at: http://bit.ly/1RIF3F7).

Ian Cook

2. A Tyne Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla* and its chick.

Only one Kittiwake chick reared on St Kilda

Kittiwake nesting success in the former strongholds of the Northern Isles and Outer Hebrides was dire in 2015. This is why the species is now Red-listed – and why the Tyneside hotel application is so outrageous.

In the Outer Hebrides, just one Kittiwake chick fledged on St Kilda in 2015. This colony has collapsed, from more than 500 pairs in 1994 to four pairs in 2015. And, along with many other seabirds, they continue to struggle in Orkney and Shetland too. There were only 570 occupied Kittiwake nests at Marwick Head, in Orkney, a decline of 90% since 1999 when the site held 5,573 pairs. In Shetland, it is now apparent (shockingly) that there are more Kittiwakes nesting along the Tyne than on Foula (like St Kilda, one of the UK's most iconic seabird islands – 277 Apparently Occupied Nests in 2015) and Hermaness (179 AON in 2015) combined (Martin Heubeck pers. comm.). The lack of suitable food – in particular sandeels *Ammodytes* – close to breeding colonies is the main reason for these declines, in turn reflecting climate-induced changes in our oceans.

On North Sea coasts, meanwhile, colonies of auks and Kittiwakes actually increased in 2015, with better food availability boosting nest productivity.

The 40th Bird Photograph of the Year

It's the longest-running bird photography competition in the world and in 2016 *British Birds* Bird Photograph of the Year marks 40 years of outstanding bird photography. And in turn, we plan to mark this milestone with a special **BPY 40**. The shortlisted entries will be showcased on the *BB* stand at Birdfair in August, where the awards will be presented, and the August *BB* will have a special feature on the 'best of the best' of BPY since its inception in 1977.

As ever, and unlike many of the rival competitions that have sprung up in its wake, BPY is free to enter – just visit our website at www.britishbirds.co.uk/about/bird-photograph-of-the-year to read the competition rules and find out how to submit up to three images for the judges' consideration.

The competition seeks to recognise the best and/or the most scientifically interesting photographs of Western Palearctic birds taken during 2015. In addition to the main awards, there is a digiscoping section, and you can submit up to three images for that as well as the main competition.

The closing date for the competition is 1st April 2016.

The final details of sponsorship are still being discussed as this issue goes to press, but we can confirm that there will, as in past years, be a cash prize of £1,000 for the winner. And we are very grateful that our long-term sponsors – Bloomsbury, Collins and the Eric Hosking Charitable Trust – will continue to support the Award too.

Peafowl update

BB subscriber Phil Hyde contacted us after the story in the December issue about the Congo Peafowl *Afropavo congensis*. He pointed us to further information about this enigmatic species on the African Bird Club website, which reported that the late Emile Mulotwa, of the University of Kisangani, worked on this species for his doctoral thesis in 2008, and made some 5–7 sightings of the bird in the wild. For more details, see www.africanbirdclub.org/news/congo-peacock-update

What YOU can do for *British Birds* in 2016

New Year's resolutions often founder by early January (will I *really* redouble my efforts on my local patch and find that BBRC rarity that has eluded me to date?) but here are a couple that are very easy to keep all year long. (1) Sign up for the monthly *BB* e-newsletter and recruit all your birding friends too. It's FREE and contains a lot of content you won't find in the journal, including a very good rarities round-up by Rare Bird Alert, additional 'News and comment', special book offers from Wild Sounds and a sneak preview of what's coming up in the next month's *BB*. You can sign up in a couple of clicks at www.britishbirds.co.uk (2) Try our digital edition. We've been publishing an electronic edition since Birdfair last year. Indeed, all 12 back issues for 2015 are available besides every new issue as it's published. You can sample a single month or subscribe for the whole year. And, if you want to have a combined print and digital subscription – so you still receive the printed journal *and* have the digital version to read on your laptop/tablet/phone – there's a special offer at www.britishbirds.co.uk/subscribe

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Return of the butcher bird? Prospects for recolonisation of the Red-backed Shrike in the UK and priorities for conservation

Mary Davies and Leigh Lock

Dan Powell

Abstract The Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* ceased to be a regular breeder in the UK in the 1980s, but over the past ten years a series of breeding records, notably at two sites, one in Wales and one on Dartmoor, Devon, raised hopes for the prospects of recolonisation. In addition, isolated pairs have bred at various sites in Scotland in several years since 2000. This paper outlines the recent breeding records, describes the status of the species in the UK and Europe and examines what factors caused the demise of the UK population and the priorities for a potential return.

Having once been common and widespread, Red-backed Shrikes *Lanius collurio* are now occasional and very rare breeding birds in the UK. Following the cessation of regular breeding in the late 1980s, there have been only sporadic breeding records. Since 2000, in addition to occasional one-off breeding records, often in Scotland, Red-backed Shrikes have bred at a site in Wales for three years running and in an area of southwest England for four consecutive years.

The reasons behind the demise of the Red-backed Shrike in Britain are poorly understood, but the main historical threats appear to include agricultural intensification, leading to a loss of habitat diversity and of abundance and availability of large invertebrate prey (Wilson *et al.* 2009); the loss of habitat as a result of scrub clearance or land abandonment; and, latterly, the threat from egg-collectors and other human disturbance (Brown & Grice 2005).

This paper presents some background to recent UK breeding records and summarises the issues influencing Red-backed Shrike populations both in the UK and elsewhere in Europe. We also explore the prospects for the species becoming a regular breeder in the UK once again.

The status of the Red-backed Shrike in Britain and Europe

Population trend and status in the UK

In the UK, the Red-backed Shrike is protected under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, and is 'Red-listed' in the most recent Birds of Conservation Concern review (Eaton *et al.* 2015) as a result of both historical and recent declines (see fig. 1). It is also a Species of European Conservation Concern (SPEC 3), owing to moderate historical decline in Europe (BirdLife International 2004).

The Red-backed Shrike was formerly widespread over much of England and Wales, but the UK population declined from the mid-nineteenth century. This trend accelerated after 1945 with the range generally contracting southwards. The population of around 300 pairs in 1952 dropped to 80–90 pairs by 1971 (Bibby 1973). The largest remaining concentration (more than 60 pairs) was to be found on heathlands in Hampshire during 1954–66 (Ash 1970). The status of the Red-backed Shrike has been documented in the annual Rare Breeding Birds Panel (RBBP) reports since 1973 (most recently in Holling *et al.* 2015), and these show that during the 1970s and early 1980s the UK population declined to a critically low level. Breeding was recorded in Scotland during 1977–79 but this was not sustained.

By 1985, the population had fallen to only six pairs and was confined to East Anglia. This dwindled further until 1989, when for the first time there were no breeding records in the whole of the UK. From 1990 to 2009 there were one or, at most, two confirmed breeding pairs in any one year. In 1991 and 1992, one pair bred again in East Anglia. Single pairs bred in Scotland sporadically during the 1990s and have bred there in several years since 2000. There was also a confirmed breeding pair recorded at a site in Wales in 2005, 2006 and 2007. No breeding attempts were recorded in 2008 and 2009 (see figs. 1 & 2).

In 2010, in addition to a pair in northwest Scotland, two pairs bred on Dartmoor, the first breeding records in England since 1992. Birds have been present on Dartmoor from 2007 to 2014, with breeding in 2010–13 inclusive (two pairs in 2010–11, one pair in 2012–13) but only a female was present in 2014. Single pairs bred again in Scotland in both 2013 (Moray & Nairn; Cook 2015) and 2014 (Highland), and there were two successful breeding pairs at different sites in 2015 (North-east Scotland, Shetland), based on information available at the time of writing (RBBP pers. comm.). Nesting attempts in Scotland have not occurred at the same locality in consecutive years (in contrast to the situation in Wales and Devon), perhaps because such records involve opportunistic breeders and generally occur in years when there are higher than average numbers of drift migrants in spring (Forrester *et al.* 2007).

Red-backed Shrikes are scarce passage migrants in Britain, in both spring and autumn, with a high proportion of records occurring in the Northern Isles. Birds are also regularly recorded along the east coasts of Scotland and England and to a lesser extent

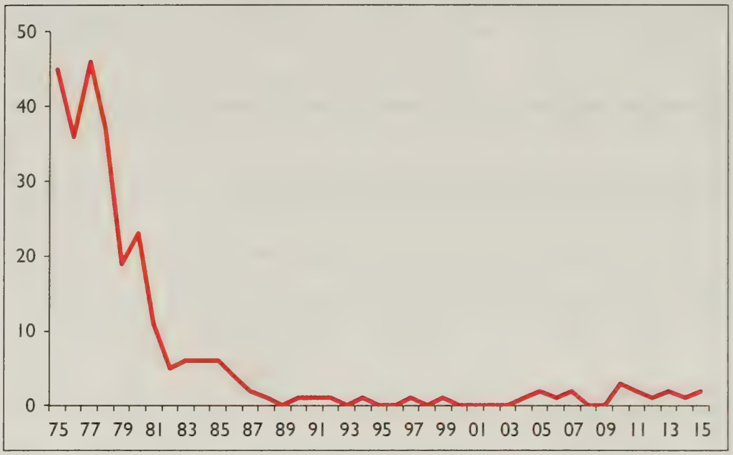

Fig. 1. Number of confirmed breeding pairs of Red-backed Shrikes *Lanius collurio* in the UK, 1975–2015 (RBBP data). Note that at the time of writing only incomplete data were available for 2014 and 2015; and that confirmed records for the 1970s are undoubtedly incomplete owing to records not being collated, although in some cases the totals may also include duplicated records.

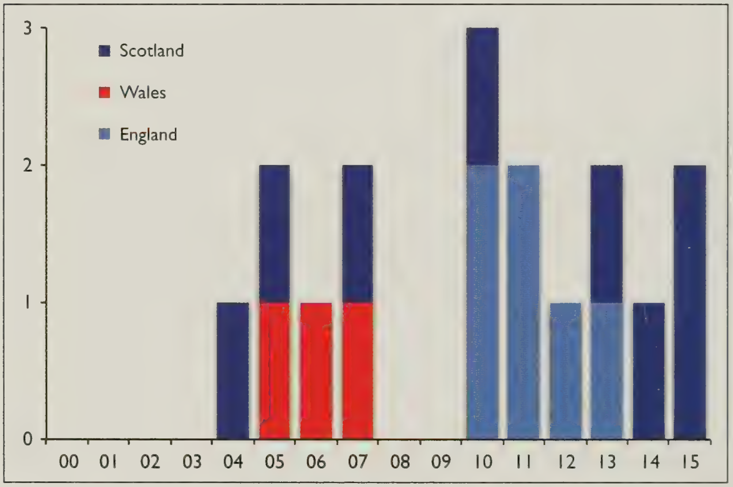

Fig. 2. Number of confirmed breeding pairs of Red-backed Shrikes in the UK, 2000–15. Note that at the time of writing only incomplete data were available for 2014 and 2015. Nonetheless, 2015 is the first time that two pairs have bred in the same year in Scotland since 1978 (when two pairs bred in Highland and Perth & Kinross; Forrester *et al.* 2007).

in southern England (White & Kehoe 2014, 2015). Since 1986 the number of spring migrants has been highly variable but has shown an overall shallow decline, with the total number of spring migrants in 2011 being the lowest on record (97) (White & Kehoe 2015).

Population trend and status in Europe

Red-backed Shrikes breed from Iberia, across the Mediterranean, north to Fennoscandia and into central Russia. The European breeding population is very large (>6,300,000 pairs), and is estimated to be stable overall (BirdLife 2015). Despite the declines over the longer term in the near Continent, small increases have been recorded in several countries in northwest Europe more recently.

In the Netherlands, Red-backed Shrike numbers have slightly more than doubled since the mid 1990s, with increases in some areas but declines in others (www.sovon.nl). The core population in the Bargerveen area (in the northern Netherlands, close to the border with Germany) increased from a few breeding pairs in the 1970s to over 100 pairs in the 1990s. This is thought to be a result of improved food abundance resulting from rewetting habitat management (Hornman *et al.* 1998), leading to high reproduction and return rates. However, at times, immigration from adjacent German populations seemed to have played a role, without which the Dutch population may not have survived (Geertsma *et al.* 2000; Hemerik *et al.* 2015). Since 2000, the population at Bargerveen has declined to around 50 pairs (Hemerik *et al.* 2015). However, at the same time Red-backed Shrike populations in other parts of the Netherlands have re-established and increased, mainly owing to habitat restoration projects. At present the total population exceeds 300 breeding pairs (Boele *et al.* 2014).

Red-backed Shrike breeding records on Dartmoor

BOX 1

In recent years, a series of records of Red-backed Shrikes on Dartmoor, Devon, culminated in breeding success in 2010, the first breeding record in Devon since 1970 (and the first in England since 1992). The breeding birds in 2010 triggered a round-the-clock protection scheme as the site was well known to birdwatchers, photographers and potentially egg-collectors.

2007	One female (one day in May)
2008	Three males present in May and June
2009	Three males present in May and June
2010	Two pairs, which fledged a total of six young (one pair failed initially, because of predation, but fledged three chicks at the second attempt; the other pair fledged three chicks at the first attempt)
2011	Two pairs, which fledged a total of seven young (one pair failed initially, then fledged four chicks at the second attempt; the other pair fledged three chicks)
2012	One pair, made two nesting attempts, both failed
2013	One pair, fledged at least two young
2014	One female present in June

This series of records is interesting for a number of reasons:

1) There has been sustained presence for eight years, with breeding attempts confirmed for four successive years. Breeding attempts have not been recorded in the same area in the UK for this length of time since the 1980s, when birds bred in the last stronghold in East Anglia.
2) Although Red-backed Shrikes have been known to live up to eight years and have a very high site fidelity between years (M. Nijssen pers. comm.), adult survival rates suggest it is likely that records have involved new birds and not only returning adults.
3) Although the mean productivity has been slightly lower than that for many other European population studies (2.5 young per nesting pair 2010–13; see Hemerik *et al.* 2015), productivity has in some years been quite good, indicating that the habitat and food availability must be favourable, at least locally.

Sadly, with just one bird present in 2014, it seems that Red-backed Shrike presence in this area has not persisted.

In France, there has been a historical decline involving the range of breeding birds gradually shifting to the southeast with a decrease in the northwest and at lower altitudes (www.atlas-ornitho.fr). However, there was something of a recovery during the 2000s, to a peak in 2007, although numbers have since declined again (www.vigienature.mnhn.fr/page/pie-grieche-ecorcheur). Local increases in the population in the past 15–20 years have not generally translated to an extension of the breeding range (www.atlas-ornitho.fr), yet it is notable that in Baie de Somme, in northern France, Red-backed Shrikes have always been quite rare (0–2 pairs recorded in any one year) but in 2014 ten pairs were recorded in this area, which is just over 80 km from the Kent coast (B. Blondel pers. comm.).

The non-breeding season

Red-backed Shrikes winter in eastern tropical and southern Africa. A recent study using geolocators (Tøttrup *et al.* 2012) recorded the entire annual migratory cycle of the Red-backed Shrike for the first time (using birds breeding in Scandinavia, at sites in Denmark and southern Sweden). The results demonstrate that Red-backed Shrikes have fundamentally different migration strategies during autumn and spring migration. The autumn migration took significantly longer, owing to much longer staging periods in the Sahelian sub-Sahara. However, the distance covered during spring migration was greater with a detour across the Arabian Peninsula. Similar tracking studies are being carried out for Dutch, Swedish, Spanish and Greek populations to further examine these findings.

It is thought that Red-backed Shrikes may be vulnerable to habitat change or drought in southern Africa. The return rate to their final wintering destination is high and suggests that occupation of the winter quarters is not opportunistic (Wernham *et al.* 2002). Red-backed Shrikes use an area at this time centred on Botswana and the Kalahari Basin and bordering regions, where it is one of the commonest Palearctic migrants (Bruderer & Bruderer 1993). This concentration would make the species vulnerable to environmental changes, and the impact of climate change on its wintering sites may be significant.

The scale and impact of hunting threats to Red-backed Shrikes on migration, such as the widespread trapping for food in North Africa, are unknown but could be substantial. Red-backed Shrikes pass through Egypt between mid August and early November (Wernham *et al.* 2002) and are taken by hunters during this time. Birds also congregate in the eastern Mediterranean in both spring and autumn and hunting may be a threat there too.

Factors affecting the British population

The main historical threats to Red-backed Shrikes in Britain are thought to relate to food and habitat availability, and deliberate persecution. Agricultural intensification has potentially had a significant effect (particularly increased use of pesticides and fertilisers and more intensive grassland management), which has led to the loss in abundance and availability of large invertebrate prey. Loss of habitat in the form of scrub clearance or, conversely, abandonment, leading to loss of scrub and grassland to more uniform tree cover, has also had an effect. Latterly, as the population declined, attention from egg-collectors was a significant factor (Brown & Grice 2005).

Habitat

The detailed ecological requirements of Red-backed Shrikes in Britain are poorly known. Historically, breeding was recorded in extensively managed farmland with unmanaged field corners, patches of scrub and hedgerows (Brown & Grice 2005). One of the last remaining breeding populations in Britain was in an area of heathland in Hampshire during the 1960s (Ash 1970). These birds occupied areas of open heathland, margins of streams, or young conifer plantations, all of which had some element of scrub such as Gorse *Ulex europaeus*, Holly *Ilex aquifolium*, Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa* and Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* with bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg. and rose *Rosa* (Ash 1970). Most pairs also occurred close to water, either streams or marshy areas. Subsequently, in the late 1980s, the pairs that bred in Norfolk occurred in areas of open scrub at the edge of

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3. Typical nesting habitat of the site on Dartmoor, Devon, in September 2012.

plantation forestry adjacent to a river and wet ground.

In recent years, shrikes have bred at a small number of sites in England, Wales and Scotland. Some habitat details are known from some of the more recent breeding sites. On Dartmoor, the site used has included an upland area of abandoned clear-fell with natural regeneration resulting in a mosaic of habitats including trees, scrub, grassland and Heather *Calluna vulgaris*, with some herbaceous flowering plants, adjacent to open, grazed moorland dominated by grass, Gorse and Bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* (Booker *et al.* 2010).

The breeding locality in Wales was an upland site, where the dominant vegetation was a mosaic of Heather and Bilberry *Vaccinium myrtillus*, with patches of Bracken, Purple Moor-grass *Molinia caerulea* and occasional wet flushes of rush, and widely scattered Hawthorns (Roberts & Lewis 2011).

In Scotland, the 2013 breeding pair was in an area of flat, marshy ground with some willow *Salix* scrub, backed by a grassy bank with Heather, Bracken, some patches of Gorse and a medium-sized Rowan *Sorbus aucuparia* tree. The surrounding area was a mixture of rough sheep-grazed pasture and heather moorland (Cook 2015). One of the 2015 pairs nested in an area of regenerating clear-fell conifer forest at around 260 m above sea level with rank grass and some Gorse scrub, close to a stream; the other pair bred in the garden of an occupied house close to sea level, where several mature, well-vegetated gardens with a range of native and introduced shrubs bordered a series of improved and unimproved pastures (RBBP pers. comm.).

A single male Red-backed Shrike was recorded holding territory in eastern England in 2011–13. This site was an area of regenerating clear-fell conifer forest, with scattered Holly bushes and some Gorse (D. E. Balmer pers. comm.).

The common factor in these brief habitat descriptions is the mosaic of habitats within a small area. This mosaic would appear to provide nesting and perching habitat, as well as a range of potential prey. This type of mosaic is often present only in fragments within a more uniform landscape, which may be insufficient to support a sustainable shrike population.

Recent studies in Europe suggest that areas with both scrub cover and grazing pasture are important to sustain a flourishing population of Red-backed Shrikes (Vanhinsbergh & Evans 2002; Brambilla *et al.* 2007). In Italy, territories comprised approximately 55–65% of grassland (with preference for low-intensity pasture and mown grassland), 15–35% shrubs and 5–20% of untilled herbaceous vegetation, and included some hedges (Brambilla *et al.* 2009). The preference for areas of extensively managed pastures, fallows and meadows in Red-backed Shrike territories in Poland confirms the importance of these habitats (Golawski & Golawska 2008). Work in the Netherlands has highlighted the added potential benefit of restoring or creating grassland pools (for dragonflies, amphibians and other aquatic prey items) or mesotrophic grassland edges with lots of flowers (for bumblebees and butterflies) (M. Nijssen pers. comm.). Healthy shrike populations in the Netherlands exist in habitats including peat moors, clear-fells, young forests and heathland (M. Geertsma pers. comm.).

In some places, Red-backed Shrikes are known to breed successfully in open areas of forest plantations. These areas are often favourable since they tend to be left to scrub up, in contrast to the management of just about any other habitat. Populations occur in this habitat in low densities in Italy (Brambilla *et al.* 2007), and in much higher densities in Sweden (Söderström & Karlsson 2010). Red-backed Shrikes also use this habitat in parts of southern Belgium but the populations here are less successful than in surrounding farmland breeding sites (Hollander *et al.* 2011).

The significant changes in the way that land is managed in Europe in recent decades – either abandonment or agricultural intensification – have resulted in significant declines in Red-backed Shrike populations in some parts of the breeding range, either through direct habitat loss or through a shift in habitat type used (and suboptimal habitats are less productive). Habitat restoration programmes have helped populations to recover in some cases.

Diet and food availability

Changes in food supply (linked to habitat change and increased use of pesticides) is thought to be one of the most significant factors in the decline of Red-backed Shrikes, with potential food abundance and diversity having had a critical role in changes in local population size (van Nieuwenhuyse *et al.* 1999; Kuper *et al.* 2000). Yet poor breeding success is not thought to have driven the decline in Britain (Tryjanowski *et al.* 2006). The reasons for decline are undoubtedly complex, but diet and food availability have clearly played some part.

Shrikes are known to take a wide range of prey depending on habitat type, although insects (and beetles in particular) seem to be favoured (Cramp & Perrins 1993). Agricultural intensification has led to a great loss in the abundance and availability of large invertebrate prey through loss of hay meadows and other semi-natural habitats, and the increased use of fertilisers and pesticides. Studies of the diet composition of different populations in the Netherlands has shown the importance of large invertebrate prey (shrikes can carry only one prey item per flight), which is noticeably lacking from the diet of decreasing populations (M. Nijssen pers comm.).

The generally broad food spectrum suggests that a decline in prey species diversity is buffered to some extent (Cramp & Perrins 1993), but it may be that prey diversity is vital to overcome the temporary availability of some prey items through the day or through the season, which forces the need to switch constantly between food types (Hornman *et al.* 1998; Kuper *et al.* 2000). In western Poland, it has been shown that during wet and cold weather vertebrate prey, including small mammals, birds and lizards, comprises a significant part of the diet, either live or from larders (Tryjanowski *et al.* 2003). In the Netherlands there is a clear positive relationship between prey availability, food intake, nestling weight and fledging success (M. Nijssen pers. comm.).

Site fidelity and immigration

As well as good breeding success, successful recolonisation will clearly depend on levels of immigration and breeding site fidelity. Site fidelity is thought to be highly variable depending on available habitat. There is some suggestion that only a small proportion of offspring return to the natal site (Cramp & Perrins 1993). However, intensive ringing effort has shown that, in the Netherlands, the yearly return rates of juveniles during 1993–98 varied between 18% and 33% (Geertsma *et al.* 2000), and during 2002–09 between 5% and 16% (recalculated from table 2 in Hemerik *et al.* 2015), much higher than return rates previously noted. However, low return rates have been recorded in other areas, such as in Poland, and such low rates appear to be normal in healthy populations with a good metapopulation structure.

The recolonisation of Red-backed Shrikes is more likely to be successful where larger areas of good habitat exist. In the Netherlands, the significant increase from a few breeding pairs in the 1970s to over 100 pairs in the 1990s was partly due to the rewetting habitat management and peat restoration of over 2,000 ha of suitable habitat (Hornman *et al.* 1998). This scale of habitat restoration may be required to

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4. Male Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*, Dartmoor, Devon, May 2010.

attract and retain Red-backed Shrikes in significant numbers in the UK. Getting birds here in the first place ultimately depends on spring migrants, however; and despite predictions of increasing climate suitability in the UK (Huntley *et al.* 2007), the numbers of spring migrants remain highly variable and have declined slightly overall in recent years (White & Kehoe 2015).

In general, prospects for recolonisation are mixed. Constraints to any population re-establishment will include sporadic events that affect small populations in ways that larger, more robust populations can withstand. Breeding productivity of small populations may be severely affected by natural events such as bad weather and predation, and also human disturbance/persecution. It may therefore be necessary to carry out short-term intervention measures to allow birds to become established.

Priority action to support recolonisation

Species protection

Nest protection and habitat enhancement at a local scale has been shown to be effective in cases where Red-backed Shrikes occupy patchy habitats in small isolated populations (Tryjanowski *et al.* 2007).

Red-backed Shrike eggs are colourful and highly variable and have therefore always been attractive to egg-collectors in Britain (Brown & Grice 2005). As the bird became rarer as a breeding species, the 'value' to egg-collectors increased. In an RSPB report on the impact of egg-collecting on scarce breeding birds during 1982–99 (Thomas *et al.* 2001), the Red-backed Shrike is listed as one of the most vulnerable species. Protection is therefore still required, and also to ensure that photographers and birdwatchers do not cause disturbance.

At recent breeding sites in Scotland, either breeding was recorded after the event or the location of birds was not well known or easily accessible. No site protection work was therefore required apart from the site locality remaining undisclosed. Similarly, in Wales, when the birds were first recorded they were at the point of leaving the breeding site in their first year. In the two subsequent years, the location (and even their presence) was not disclosed to anyone other than a very close circle of birdwatchers (J. Lewis pers. comm.). No specific guard was set up, though extended watches were undertaken at irregular intervals.

In contrast, on Dartmoor, the presence of shrikes in the two years prior to the first of the recent breeding attempts was well known and had attracted birdwatchers and photographers. The presence of the birds had almost certainly come to the attention of egg-collectors too. Consequently, when a pair of Red-backed Shrikes turned up in 2010, the location had already been widely publicised. The RSPB, in partnership with the Dartmoor Study Group, Devon Birds (previously known as the Devon Birdwatching & Preservation Society) and the Forestry Commission, assisted by Devon & Cornwall Police, Dartmoor National Park Authority and Natural England, ran a 24-hour nest protection scheme, primarily to protect the breeding birds from egg-collectors, and other human disturbance. Protocols were developed and site staff were employed by RSPB for the duration of the breeding period. Many volunteers, together with staff from some partner organisations, also took part in the protection rota. The operation required over 3,000 person-hours in 2010, with around two-thirds of that total being volunteer effort. In addition to the required protection duties, potential disturbance was minimised, the birds were monitored and data collected on behaviour and diet (Booker *et al.* 2010). From 2011 to 2013, similar operations were carried out with adjustments made depending on the location of the breeding birds (Jessop & Rylands 2011–14).

The Dartmoor birds did attract visits from known egg-collectors but the presence of staff and volunteers deterred any serious attempts on the nest. There were also many people visiting the site, either to see and photograph the birds or for other reasons (e.g. walking, cycling). The protection scheme ensured that, as far as possible, there was no undue disturbance to the nests or wider breeding territory, but unfortunately a few incidents with photographers did occur and required police support.

Despite legal protection, it seems inevitable that in some circumstances nest-site protection, such as that described on

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5. Male Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* with recently fledged juvenile, Dartmoor, Devon, September 2011.

Dartmoor, is necessary. Such schemes are resource-heavy in terms of time and equipment, but may be essential at sites that are publicly known, accessible and where breeding birds are returning with some regularity. It is vital that legal enforcement continues to operate effectively and acts to dissuade offenders from trying to collect wild bird eggs or disturb the breeding birds. The cooperation and support of birdwatchers and photographers in minimising disturbance to this sensitive species is also essential.

Interventions

In addition to protecting birds from direct persecution, specific interventions can improve breeding success and therefore increase the likelihood of successful recolonisation.

Supplementary feeding

Prolonged periods of bad weather may result in a shortage of food items at a crucial time in the development of the nestlings. In such cases, a possible solution is to provide supplementary food. Supplementary food is often supplied in species recovery projects involving small or vulnerable populations. Boutin (1990) looked at 66 supplemental feeding studies on birds and documented a number of consistent effects: earlier laying, increased territorial behaviour, increased body mass, larger clutch sizes, and accelerated population growth. Other studies show that, for small fragmented populations, this can have a marked effect on reproductive output (e.g. Schoech *et al.* 2008). In reintroduction projects, supplementary feeding has been proven to have a significant positive effect on successful outcomes (e.g. White *et al.* 2012). In California, intensive recovery efforts have been directed towards the San Clemente Loggerhead Shrike *Lanius ludovicianus mearnsi* in recent years, including the use of supplementary feeding, which has been helping to establish populations (Heath *et al.* 2008).

While there seems to be adequate food at sites recently used by Red-backed Shrikes in the UK in good summer weather, prolonged bad weather could result in food stress and also increase the chances of predation (hungry chicks are more vocal) or nest failure due to chilling (especially of chicks) as the female may be forced to spend more time away from the nest foraging. Supplementary feeding has been tried only once with shrikes in the UK, on Dartmoor in the exceptionally wet summer of 2012. Here, monitoring showed that the frequent and prolonged rainfall noticeably reduced the availability of airborne insect prey and forced the birds to spend long periods of time hunting for ground prey such as beetles and lizards. A supplementary feeding strategy was drawn up and mealworms were provided during the pair's second nesting attempt. During poor weather, the male regularly took mealworms for himself and to the nest. 'Wild' prey was also taken during this period. However, despite the supplementary food, this nest also failed.

Supplementary feeding programmes are demanding in terms of resources and effort and could also increase the risk of the nest location being revealed. Other potential problems with supplementary feeding include a dependency on artificial food and vulnerability to predators, but overall supplemental feeding can have a significantly beneficial outcome in conservation terms. It is vital to ensure the nutritional quality of the supplements and to ensure that a feeding regimen is agreed and monitored.

Predators

The main nest predators of the Red-backed Shrike in Europe appear to be Magpies *Pica pica* and Carrion *Corvus corone* or Hooded Crows *C. cornix*, but other crows (including Eurasian Jays *Garrulus glandarius*), Eurasian Sparrowhawks *Accipiter nisus*, Red Foxes *Vulpes vulpes*, Adders *Vipera berus*, mustelids and even small rodents have also been recorded predating birds and nests. Studies in Europe suggest that the presence of nest predators influences where birds choose to nest (Roos & Part 2004; Roos 2006) and this may even affect nest choice within the season (Söderström 2001). Aggressive behaviour and avoidance behaviour are thus important factors in breeding success (Golawski & Mitrus 2008). When trying to ensure breeding success of a small number of pioneer birds, it may be necessary to consider predator exclusion or control. On Dartmoor, following Magpie predation of a nest in 2010, licensed control of Magpies of a very limited nature was carried out in 2010 and 2011 to reduce the risk of repeat predation.

Habitat management and creation

Habitat and prey availability is vital for the widespread re-establishment of Red-backed Shrikes in Britain. A mosaic of scrub cover and open ground, including grazed land, providing nesting and foraging habitat, seems to be the key requirement. The evidence from elsewhere in Europe suggests that this habitat mosaic can be created within farmland, heathland, moorland or forestry, and particularly where these habitats abut one another. In addition, the evidence from the Netherlands suggests that there is potential benefit in restoring or creating wetter areas within this habitat mosaic to extend the range of prey species.

Small-scale habitat enhancement may be necessary where birds are consistently favouring a particular location. For example, natural succession and a lack of grazing at the Dartmoor site meant that habitat was becoming overgrown in some areas, with grassland becoming long and rank and open areas being lost to encroachment from scrub and trees. Selected scrub, some mature gorse and trees were cut down and several large patches cleared to create sheltered areas of low grassland or bare soil to provide suitable conditions for invertebrates and to encourage ruderal flowering plants (Jessop & Rylands 2012).

At a landscape scale, the identification, restoration and creation of a significant area of suitable habitat, or a network of such habitats, is perhaps the most important action to ensure that Red-backed Shrikes can re-establish in the UK over the longer term. There are additional biodiversity benefits of managing, restoring and creating habitat in this way. The mosaic nature of the habitat and improved nectar supply will boost numbers of invertebrates, as well as reptiles, amphibians, small mammals, and other birds, such as Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*, Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia* and Linnet *Linaria cannabina.*

In summary, the following conservation actions to support the recolonisation of Britain by the Red-backed Shrike are suggested:

- **Be alert to potential breeding Red-backed Shrikes in suitable habitat and put in place measures to enhance their breeding success if required.** Particular attention should be given to any spring migrant Red-backed Shrikes in suitable breeding habitat anywhere in the UK. Birdwatchers are encouraged to monitor behaviour of migrant birds for signs of breeding. Observations elsewhere suggest that females in particular can be secretive during the breeding season and it is possible for potential breeding to pass unnoticed. Sightings of spring birds in suitable breeding habitat should, however, remain confidential and not be reported to bird information services. The need to monitor or the type of monitoring should be assessed alongside the associated additional disturbance this may cause.

- **For potential breeding sites, consider the need for protection and site confidentiality.** Any potentially vulnerable breeding sites should be reported to the RSPB, who can provide advice on the risk and appropriate level of protection.
- **Record details of habitat used and prey abundance.** For any pairs, record details of nest sites, foraging areas, food items, and behaviour to improve knowledge of breeding ecology and inform species recovery programmes. Where appropriate, ringing and measurements of eggs/nestlings and fledglings could also be taken but only under licence.
- **Consider intervention options to improve breeding success, and monitor effects if deployed.** This may involve predator aversion or control and possibly supplementary feeding.
- **Habitat maintenance and enhancement around pairs.** This may involve winter management of the breeding site itself, but will also involve habitat availability in the surrounding area to assess longer-term recolonisation prospects. The long-term range expansion forecast will depend on birds establishing in well-managed semi-natural habitat if not on lower-input farming systems, which is dependent on farming policies, nationally and internationally.
- **Monitor and record details of breeding attempts.** All possible, probable and confirmed records should be submitted to the RBBP for collation and inclusion in the annual reports.

If we put these measures in place around pioneer pairs, we have the greatest chance of the Red-backed Shrike remaining as a rare breeder in Britain in a few scattered localities. In some cases, this can be best delivered through employing on-site wardening staff for species protection schemes and allocating staff and volunteer resources for other interventions, such as site management and monitoring. In other cases, more limited presence and intervention is recommended. However, if we are to see population increases and range restoration, we will need to be more proactive in securing landscape-scale change.

Conclusions

Having been lost as a breeding species, it is unclear whether the Red-backed Shrike can become established once again in the UK. A small increase in numbers in northwest Europe in the last decade and the occurrence of breeding birds in Britain since 2004 (including return breeders in two separate areas), provides some signs that recolonisation could take place. However, the long-term problem of habitat loss still applies, and may still make recolonisation unlikely. Egg-collectors and human disturbance remain serious threats and sites in some cases may need to be protected.

Several wetland birds, including Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*, Great White Egret *Ardea alba* and Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*, have established or re-established regular breeding populations in the UK since 2010, while other species associated with wetlands are considered to have the potential to do so in the next few decades (Ausden *et al.* 2014, 2015). Yet no bird species associated with farmland or other open, dry habitats is thought to have naturally colonised Britain in recent decades (Ausden *et al.* 2014). For example, European Serins *Serinus serinus* almost colonised successfully, having bred (albeit sporadically) since the late 1960s. Yet numbers of Serins in a breeding context have declined since the mid 1990s, mirroring large declines on the near Continent. It seems that whilst prospects for some wetland colonists are good, this is dependent on creation, restoration and management of large areas of suitable wetland habitat and unless we can provide suitably managed pastoral/farmland landscapes, opportunities for Red-backed Shrikes and other species of similar habitats may be limited.

6. Female Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* carrying a Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta* at a breeding site in Shetland, July 2015.

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Report on scarce migrant birds in Britain in 2013

Part 1: non-passerines

Steve White and Chris Kehoe

Surf Scoters *Melanitta perspicillata*, with Common *M. nigra* and Velvet Scoters *M. fusca*.

Abstract This report presents data on the non-passerine scarce migrants recorded in Britain during 2013. It was a record year for no fewer than three species in this section of the report: White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii* (42 birds), Great White Egret *Ardea alba* (184) and Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* (161). For all three, it continued a pattern of generally high numbers in the last decade or so, and the same can be said for several other species that fared well this year, but particularly American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica* (second-best year on record) and Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos* (fourth best). At the opposite end of the spectrum, there were just single-figure numbers of six species: American Wigeon *Anas americana*, Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca*, Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*, Kentish Plover *Anarhynchus alexandrinus*, White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus* and Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus*.

Introduction

This is the 13th report on scarce migrant birds in Britain, covering the year 2013. As well as providing a summary of the basic data for each species in 2013, there are graphs for many species not covered in detail in the recent reports (White & Kehoe 2014, 2015), mainly showing geographical distribution and phenology of records between 2008 and 2013, and annual totals since 1990.

The summary statistics in this report have in some cases been updated. In most instances this is because additional information has come to light since the last report was published. Both annual variation and trends have been recalculated for the period 1990–2013. Variation has been based on the calculation of coefficients of variation[1] but is expressed in purely descriptive terms using four categories: low, moderate, high and very high. Increasing or decreasing trends since 1990 are cited only if statistically significant[2].

The number of records for almost all species has increased hugely over the past 50 years but 2013 was fairly typical of recent years with 4,853 records involving 7,743 birds. When ‘records’ are referred to in the text, these relate to individual birds unless stated otherwise. Where possible, only new birds have been included in the totals and those believed to have been returning from previous years or seen elsewhere in the same year (mostly in the same recording area) have been omitted. Determining precise and accurate national totals is a particular issue for some of the non-passerines, a number of which (mainly the larger and more obvious ones) are highly mobile and difficult to keep track of, so that national totals may be somewhat exaggerated. Records of escaped and feral birds and hybrids have also been excluded wherever possible.

Records were received from all but seven recording areas. None was received from Caithness, the Clyde Islands, Essex, Gower, the Isle of Wight, Staffordshire or the West Midlands, and for these areas reports from BirdGuides were used. In these instances only those records that appeared likely to have been confirmed were used, and one-day records of rarer species, together with those of flyovers, were excluded from the analysis.

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[1] The mean number of individuals recorded divided by their standard deviation and expressed as a percentage.

[2] At the 5% level as tested by linear or polynomial regression analysis.

‘Black Brant’ *Branta bernicla nigricans*

Total 1958–2013	No. 2013 (rank/56)	Other annual maxima 1958–2013 (year/number/rank)	Trend 1990–2013	Annual variability 2000–2013
339	14 (11)	2006 & 2008/31/1= 2002/24/3	Increase	Moderate

There were 54 records involving 65 individuals but only 20% (compared with 42% during 2011–12) were regarded as probably new birds in the counties concerned. Since Black Brants can be quite mobile within and between winters, the true total of new arrivals may be even lower. However, six first-winter birds were obviously new. Fig. 1 illustrates the recent distribution, highlighting the concentration of records along the English east and south coasts, where most of the UK Dark-bellied Brent Geese *B. b. bernicla* winter. Only one record failed to fit that pattern in 2013, a presumed returning bird in Cumbria during both winter periods. West-coast records may be suggestive of a Nearctic origin.

Most birds are presumed to originate from the more westerly portions of the East Siberian breeding range, where they come into contact with Dark-bellied Brents, which act as a ‘carrier species’ and with which intergrades occur, some of which have reached Europe.

(Breeds Arctic NE Siberia W to Lena delta, where overlaps with nominate race. Majority breed low Arctic from N & W Alaska, E through parts of N coast Canada. Migratory, wintering locally on Pacific Coast from Alaska south to S Baja California, and coastal N China, Korean Peninsula & Japan, where now rare.)

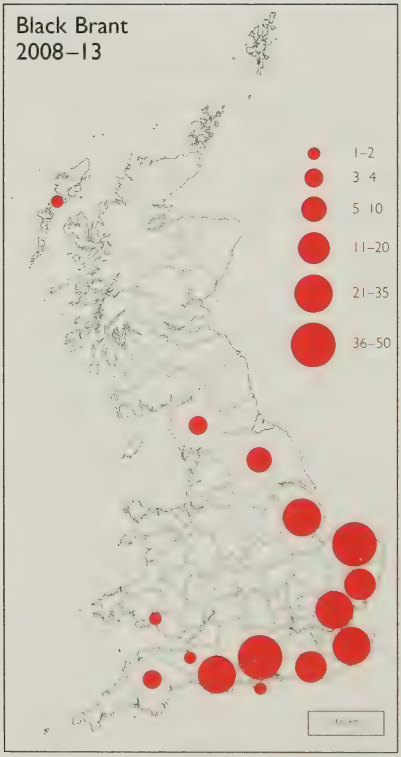


Fig. 1. Distribution of ‘Black Brants’ *Branta bernicla nigricans* in Britain, 2008–13 (all records, including returning birds).

Annual means 1958–2013
1958–59
0
1960–69
0
1970–79
<1
1980–89
3
1990–99
5
2000–09
19
2010–13
16

Gary Thoburn

7. Adult 'Black Brant' *Branta bernicla nigricans*, Holkham, Norfolk, January 2013.

American Wigeon *Anas americana*

Total 1958–2013	No. 2013 (rank/56)	Other annual maxima 1958–2013 (year/number/rank)	Trend 1990–2013	Annual variability 2000–2013
509	7 (28=)	2000/31/1 2011/28/2	None	Moderate

Annual means 1958–2013	
1958–59	1990–99
1	15
1960–69	2000–09
1	17
1970–79	2010–13
4	13
1980–89	
8	

Although 20 birds were reported in 2013, 13 were believed to be returnees; and since no young birds were recorded, the real total may have been even lower. The total of seven new arrivals in both 2012 and 2013 is the lowest since 1994. Apart from returning females in Gloucestershire and Herefordshire, all birds seen were adult males, and all probable new arrivals were in coastal counties. Only one arrived during the second half of the year, in Northumberland.

(Breeds C Alaska E across temperate Canada to Quebec & Nova Scotia, & S into NW & Midwest USA. Winters S Alaska, coastal British Columbia, Canada and S throughout southern USA & C America to Colombia, Greater Antilles & West Indies.)

Green-winged Teal *Anas carolinensis*

Total 1958–2013	No. 2013 (rank/56)	Other annual maxima 1958–2013 (year/number/rank)	Trend 1990–2013	Annual variability 2000–2013
1,025	42 (8)	2004/60/1 2002/59/2	Increase	Moderate

Annual means 1958–2013	
1958–59	1990–99
1	23
1960–69	2000–09
3	45
1970–79	2010–13
6	33
1980–89	
12	

There were 70 records of males in 2013, all adults. The assessment that rather more than half were new arrivals was proportionately higher than during 2011–12 and perhaps a little generous. We still await the first proven record of a female in Britain but they must surely occur. The distribution was essentially similar to that mapped in our 2008–10 report (*Brit. Birds* 107: 146). All records were of singles, although three arrived separately on Tiree (Argyll) between 11th March and 20th April.

(Widespread breeder throughout North America from Alaska to Newfoundland, S to N USA. Winters British Columbia, Canada, throughout USA & Mexico to southern C America & West Indies.)

Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris*

Total 1958–2013	No. 2013 (rank/56)	Other annual maxima 1958–2013 (year/number/rank)	Trend 1990–2013	Annual variability 2000–2013
738	22 (14)	2001/52/1 2002/42/2	Declining after earlier increase	Low

Annual means 1958–2013	
1958–59	1
1960–69	1
1970–79	8
1980–89	13
1990–99	13
2000–09	32
2010–13	19

Although 47 Ring-necked Ducks were reported, 25 were considered to have been seen in previous years. There were five juvenile/first-winter birds – singles in Argyll (1st May), Devon (13th January) and Hertfordshire (26th October), and two in Leicestershire & Rutland (12th and 15th October). A further 17 adults were regarded as new arrivals to the counties involved although, given the propensity of this species to wander widely, this may be an overestimate. Ring-necked Ducks (including returning birds) were seen in 26 recording areas, including eight in Scotland and two in Wales.

Since 2000, Ring-necked Duck populations in North America have been largely stable, but at a higher level than the long-term average since 1955 (Roy *et al.* 2012), which may account for the higher numbers in Britain in the same period.

(Breeds locally E Alaska, throughout cool temperate Canada from S Yukon to Maritime Provinces, and N USA from Washington to Maine. Winters in ice-free regions of southernmost Canada, S throughout southern USA to S Mexico, Costa Rica & Greater Antilles.)

Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca*

Total 1986–2013	No. 2013 (rank/28)	Other annual maxima 1986–2013 (year/number/rank)	Trend 1990–2013	Annual variability 2000–2013
323	5 (25)	1987/27/1 1986/20/2	Increase now reversed	Moderate

Annual means 1986–2013			
1986–89	18	2000–09	12
1990–99	11	2010–13	7

No escaped birds were reported this year but three of the eight presumably wild birds had probably been seen in previous years, including a female at Minsmere (Suffolk) from 17th April to 9th May, a bird which had first been seen there as a juvenile in 2009. Presumed new arrivals are listed below.

27th January to 2nd March, Priory Country Park (Bedfordshire) – adult male
31st January to 1st February, Danson Park (Greater London) – adult female
27th February to 17th March, again 12th June, Ham Wall (Somerset) – adult male
25th March to 7th April, Otmoor (Oxfordshire) – adult male
16th November, Dungeness (Kent) – adult female

Ferruginous Ducks have undergone a significant decline since the turn of the century and the ten-year

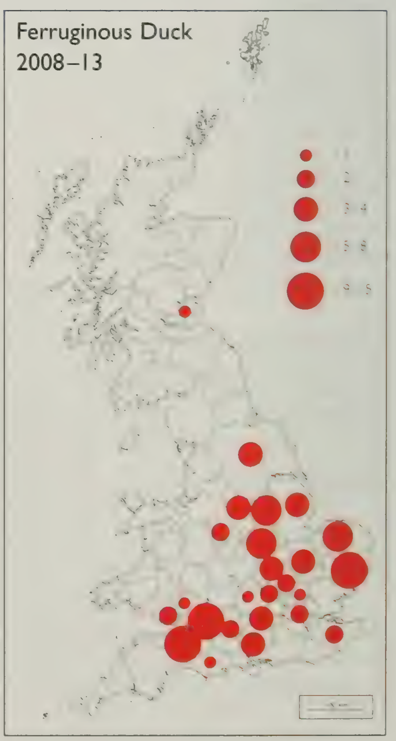


Fig. 2. Distribution of Ferruginous Ducks *Aythya nyroca* in Britain, 2008–13 (including returning birds).

mean for probable new arrivals now stands at 8.6. Their status here reflects the global assessment as Near Threatened (BirdLife International 2015). Fig. 2 maps the distribution of all records of presumed wild birds, including returning individuals, over the past six years. This species is almost wholly restricted to southern and central England with just a solitary record in Scotland and two in Wales.

(Breeds Poland & Hungary E through Ukraine to Caspian Sea, but distribution patchy. Elsewhere breeds S Spain, Kazakhstan, W Mongolia & Tibetan Plateau. Migratory, most winter E Mediterranean, Black & Caspian Seas, NE Africa & Indian subcontinent.)

Surf Scoter *Melanitta perspicillata*

Total 1958–2013	No. 2013 (rank/56)	Other annual maxima 1958–2013 (year/number/rank)	Trend 1990–2013	Annual variability 2000–2013
566	17 (10)	2003/30/1 1999/26/2	None	Low

Annual means 1958–2013	
1958–59	1
1960–69	2
1970–79	6
1980–89	12
1990–99	13
2000–09	18
2010–13	14

Surf Scoters tend to be seen at broadly the same sites in successive years, making judgements about new arrivals extremely difficult; of the 38 reported in 2013, fewer than half have been treated as new birds (although, with 17 new arrivals, 2013 is the best year since 2008, with 21). However, there is little doubt that many go undetected among distant and mobile flocks of Common Scoters *M. nigra.* Of the 17 new birds in 2013, seven and five were seen off the coasts of Scotland and England respectively, while the five Welsh records included a very unusual inland bird, a male at Lake Vyrnwy (Montgomeryshire) on 2nd July. Four juvenile/first-winters were found, together with 12 adult males and one female.

(Breeds coastal Alaska from Kotzebue Sound to Alaska Peninsula, & Canada from Mackenzie River delta S to S Yukon, NE British Columbia, C Alberta, N Saskatchewan, N Manitoba, & E to C Quebec & Labrador. Winters on coast from S Alaska S to Baja California, Mexico, and Canadian Maritime Provinces S to Texas Gulf coast, USA.)

White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii*

Total 1958–2013	No. 2013 (rank/56)	Other annual maxima 1958–2013 (year/number/rank)	Trend 1990–2013	Annual variability 2000–2013
478	42 (1)	2008/33/2 2007/29/3	Increase	Moderate

Annual means 1958–2013	
1958–59	1
1960–69	1
1970–79	4
1980–89	6
1990–99	8
2000–09	18
2010–13	25

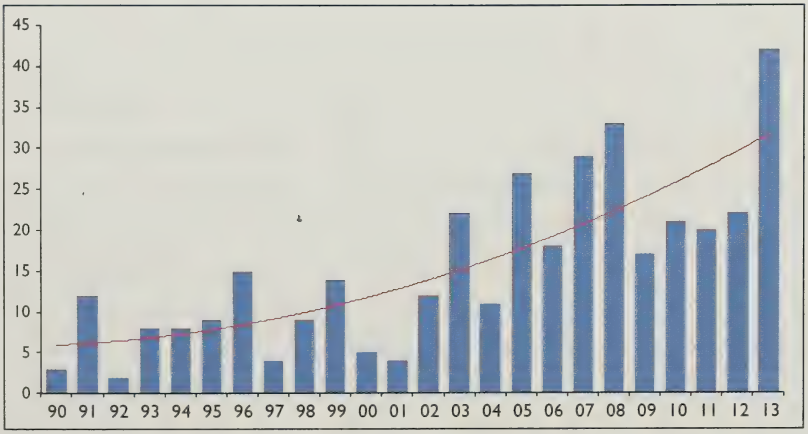


Fig. 3. Annual totals of White-billed Divers *Gavia adamsii* in Britain, 1990–2013.

Rich Andrews

8. White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii,* Brixham, Devon, December 2013.

How far the seemingly inexorable increase in records represents a real change in status is open to question; it seems likely that increased observer awareness and survey effort may have played a significantly more important role (fig. 3). Although a small number of midwinter records are thought to involve returning birds (including four in Shetland in 2013), most records are treated here as new arrivals. Indeed, more than 80% of all this year's records occurred in the months of March to May and may perhaps best be regarded as passage migrants.

Since the species was dropped from the BBRC list in 2008, 93% of records have come from Scotland with eight seen in the English North Sea, two in the English Channel, one in Wales and one other in the Irish Sea (fig. 4). Another spring stopover locality has been discovered in Scotland, off Portsoy, North-east Scotland, where systematic boat surveys resulted in a total of 13 individuals being found in 2013 (Baxter *et al.* 2013). A bird in Brixham harbour on 25th–31st December 2013 was the third record for Devon and the only one outside Scotland in 2013.

(Breeds along Arctic coasts of European Russia from Yamal Peninsula & Novaya Zemlya E through Arctic coastal regions of Siberia, N Alaska, & Canada E to Melville Peninsula, Nunavut. Winters at sea in E Atlantic S to S Norway, & ice-free N Pacific S to N British Columbia and N Japan. Some winter inland in North America.)

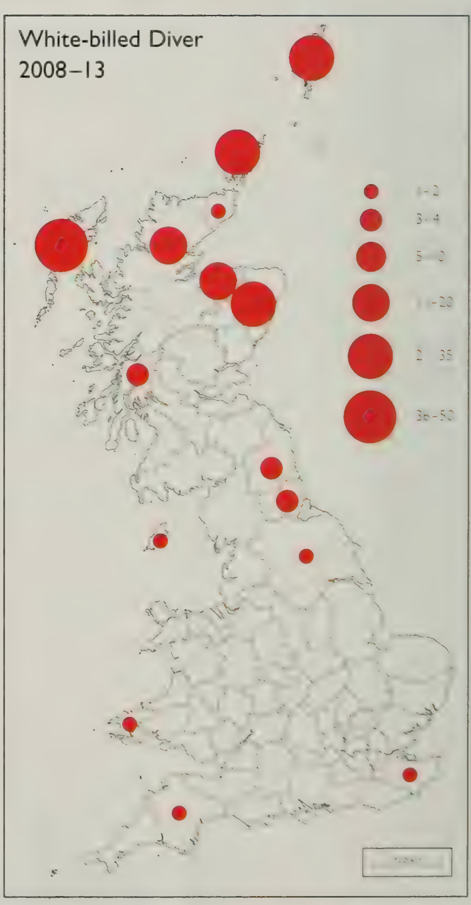


Fig. 4. Distribution of White-billed Divers *Gavia adamsii* in Britain, 2008–13 (including returning birds).

Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea*

Total 1958–2013	No. 2013 (rank/56)	Other annual maxima 1958–2013 (year/number/rank)	Trend 1990–2013	Annual variability 2000–2013
28,469	200 (17)	1998/5,116/1 1999/2,295/2	None	Very high

Annual means 1958–2013	
1958–59	0
1960–69	17
1970–79	18
1980–89	453
1990–99	1,519
2000–09	623
2010–13	542

More than half of 2013's modest total of 200 was seen on pelagic trips off Scilly while Cornwall, as usual, accounted for the majority of shore-based records. Two were seen in Wales, both off Strumble Head (Pembrokeshire), on 23rd June and 24th August, and two were seen in Scotland, off North Ronaldsay (Orkney) on 13th August and Brora (Highland) on 26th September – the last of the year. The first was the Strumble Head bird of 23rd June but most were seen between late July and the end of August. Peak numbers were a little later than usual; between 2008 and 2012, more than three-quarters were seen in July, and most of the remainder in August but in 2013 those proportions were reversed with 80% of the annual total in August. More than 99% of July and August records since 2008 have been in southwest England but this falls to 60% in September as some birds disperse northwards.

Cory's Shearwater remains a rare bird along the North Sea coast (although records are more frequent than along the English Channel coast), yet numbers in the North Sea appear to show little correlation with those in a good 'Cory's year' in the southwest.

(Breeds E North Atlantic in Canary Islands, Madeira, Selvagens, Desertas, Azores and other islands. Disperses widely N to S Ireland, S England, and E to coastal NE USA and Canadian Maritime Provinces. Winters S to South Atlantic.)

Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*

Total 1958–2013	No. 2013 (rank/56)	Other annual maxima 1958–2013 (year/number/rank)	Trend 1990–2013	Annual variability 2000–2013
697	6 (20)	1988/103/1 2009/75/2	None	High

Annual means 1958–2013	
1958–59	0
1960–69	0
1970–79	0
1980–89	19
1990–99	6
2000–09	38
2010–13	16

Britain's earliest-ever Wilson's Storm-petrel was recorded in 2013, off Scilly (in sea area Sole) on 31st May. Despite that promising start, 2013 proved to be the poorest year since 1997, with just six birds recorded. Four were seen on pelagic trips off Scilly (the May bird plus three others between 1st and 15th August) and two from land, both in Cornwall: off Porthgwarra on 13th June and Falmouth on 2nd July. Since 2008 August has been the peak month for this species (fig. 5) and, of the 157 records in that time, 135 (85%) have been seen on pelagic trips off Scilly or from the ferry between Penzance and Scilly.

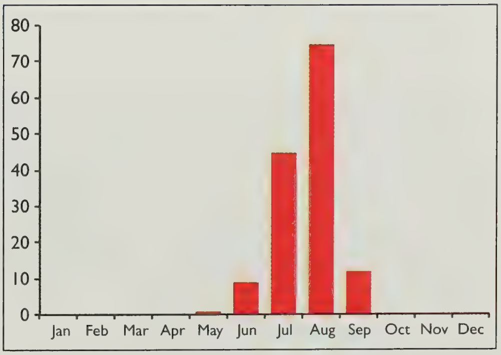


Fig. 5. Arrival dates of Wilson's Storm-petrels *Oceanites oceanicus* in Britain by month, 2008–13.

(Breeds on rocky coastline & offshore islands of Antarctic. Migrates N to winter throughout southern oceans, N to C North Atlantic along E seaboard of North America N to Newfoundland, Canada, & E to Bay of Biscay in W Europe.)

Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*

Total 1958–2013	No. 2013 (rank/56)	Other annual maxima 1958–2013 (year/number/rank)	Trend 1990–2013	Annual variability 2000–2013
577	11 (18)	1990/61/1 1987/53/2	None	Moderate

Annual means 1958–2013		
1958–59	1980–89	2000–09
1	13	12
1960–69	1990–99	2010–13
3	18	11
1970–79		
6		

Ray Scally

Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*

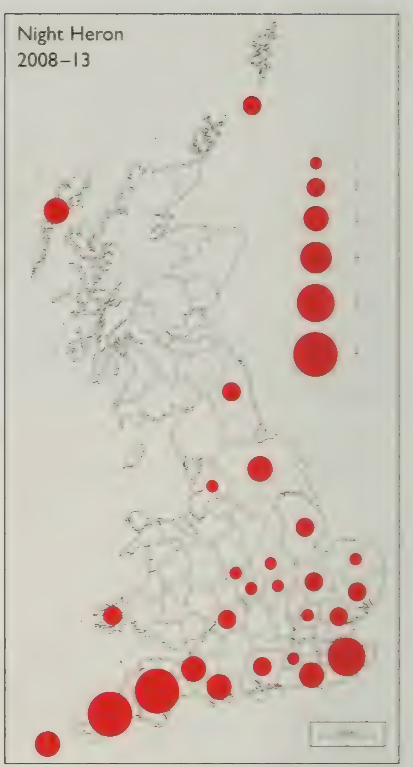


Fig. 6. Distribution of Night Herons *Nycticorax nycticorax* in Britain, 2008–13.

There was a typical bias towards southern England and only one reached Wales in 2013, a bird at Ritac (Pembrokeshire) on 25th May (fig. 6). The first was seen on 24th April, followed by four in May, two in June, singles in July and September, and two in October with the last on 25th. Four birds were aged as adults, with the remainder being first or second calendar-years. Remarkably, all the definite adults were seen for one day only, while several younger birds lingered, notably first-summers at Dartington (Devon) from 24th April to 2nd June, and Old Moor (Yorkshire) from 26th June to 4th September. Two free-flying birds remained at Edinburgh Zoo throughout the year but there were no reports of escaped birds this year.

(Widespread but local throughout Mediterranean Basin & N to France, Belgium & the Netherlands. Elsewhere, breeds Morocco, Ukraine, Turkey & throughout Indian subcontinent & SE Asia N to Japan, & locally throughout sub-Saharan Africa. Widespread North & South America.)

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*

Total 1958–2013	No. 2013 (rank/56)	Other annual maxima 1958–2013 (year/number/rank)	Trend 1990–2013	Annual variability 2000–2013
703	10 (13)	2008/189/1 2007/102/2	Increase	High

New arrivals declined in 2013 for the third consecutive year, this time dramatically. The expectation that Cattle Egret would follow the pattern of rapid increase and colonisation shown by Little *Egretta garzetta* and Great White Egrets *Ardea alba* appears to be fading rapidly; numbers in 2013

Annual means 1958–2013	
1958–59	0
1960–69	1
1970–79	1
1980–89	3
1990–99	6
2000–09	46
2010–13	37

were the lowest since 2004. One at Llanfachraeth (Anglesey) on 12th–17th May was the only record outside England, and one at Frodsham (Cheshire & Wirral) the only other in the west of Britain. Five birds arrived during the winter months, two in spring and three in early autumn, roughly matching their occurrence pattern over the past six years.

(Common & widespread S Spain & Portugal, expanding N in France. N populations disperse outside breeding season, mostly into Africa. Widespread resident throughout much of Africa, S USA, and N & C South America.)

Great White Egret *Ardea alba*

Total 1958–2013	No. 2013 (rank/56)	Other annual maxima 1958–2013 (year/number/rank)	Trend 1990–2013	Annual variability 2000–2013
1,251	184 (1)	2011/156/2 2009/153/3	Increase	High

Annual means 1958–2013	
1958–59	0
1960–69	0
1970–79	1
1980–89	2
1990–99	7
2000–09	55
2010–13	150

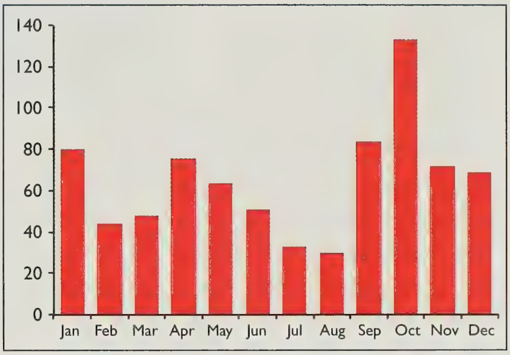


Fig. 7. Arrival dates of Great White Egrets *Ardea alba* in Britain by month, 2008–13.

As for other large, conspicuous and mobile species, the statistics presented here represent a best estimate of new arrivals. They exclude the breeding population in Somerset (where two pairs raised five young) and birds that the balance of probability suggests wandered within and between counties. Even so, it is clear that the Great White Egret is more than maintaining the increase that began in around 2002. This expansion is still confined almost entirely to England and Wales, however; there was just one Scottish record in 2013, at Edderton Sands (Highland) on 24th–25th October. Great White Egrets can turn up at any time of the year but the largest numbers arrive during autumn, many of them remaining over winter (fig. 7). The only definite juvenile was at Blagdon and Chew Valley Lakes (Avon) from 27th September to 4th October – possibly a bird from the Somerset Levels.

(Increasing in Europe, particularly the Netherlands & France. Breeding range from E Austria to Ukraine fragmented & generally rare. Migratory, most wintering N Africa & E Mediterranean, although increasingly common C & NW Europe. Other populations breed Africa, Asia, Australia & the Americas.)

John Malloy

9. Great White Egret *Ardea alba*, Hauxley, Northumberland, May 2013.

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*

Total 1958–2013	No. 2013 (rank/56)	Other annual maxima 1958–2013 (year/number/rank)	Trend 1990–2013	Annual variability 2000–2013
990	25 (12)	2011/41/1 1987/35/2	None	Low

Annual means 1958–2013	
1958–59	1990–99
5	20
1960–69	2000–09
7	19
1970–79	2010–13
19	27
1980–89	
21	

10. Juvenile Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*, St Mary's, Scilly, October 2013.

Steve Young/Birdwatch

This year's pattern of arrivals was typical of recent years. The earliest of the five April birds was at Sandwich Bay (Kent) on 22nd, followed by ten in May and two in June, two of which were aged as immatures. Eight arrived in autumn (four were juveniles) with the last at Cley and other sites in Norfolk on 27th November. Three were seen in Wales (in Pembrokeshire, Gwent and Gower/East Glamorgan), and the remainder in ten English counties.

(Breeds throughout S Europe from S Spain locally N to the Netherlands & E to S Russia, Iran, & C Asia to Kazakhstan. Winters sub-Saharan Africa. Other resident races in S & SE Asia.)

White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*

Total 1958–2013	No. 2013 (rank/56)	Other annual maxima 1958–2013 (year/number/rank)	Trend 1990–2013	Annual variability 2000–2013
1,115	19 (23)	2004/77/1 2012/71/2	Increase	Moderate

Annual means 1958–2013
1958–59
0
1960–69
3
1970–79
16
1980–89
15
1990–99
21
2000–09
43
2010–13
35

The year 2013 saw the lowest total of White Storks in Britain in the last decade, and the marked increase in numbers in the early years of this century seems to be tailing off. It remains unclear to what extent this reflects more stringent assessment of provenance, although different counties inevitably apply different criteria when deciding origin. In 2013, only four birds were reported as escapes or of unknown origin but doubt continues to cling to others, particularly in parts of northern England. As in recent years, most of the 2013 arrivals were in spring (see *Brit. Birds* 106: 382, fig. 20), with 12 in April, one in May, and four in June. These were followed by singles in July and October, the date of 19th October for the latter bird, at South Warnborough (Hampshire), being a particularly late one for a species that should be in southern Europe or Africa by mid September. All records were of singles with the exception of six at Bagillt (Flintshire) on 22nd April and two at Southampton (Hampshire) on 2nd June.

(Breeds Iberian Peninsula & temperate E Europe E to W Russia, Turkey & Iran. Reintroduction projects are returning species to former range in NW Europe & these are likely source of some British records. Winters sub-Saharan Africa & increasingly in Iberian Peninsula.)

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*

Total 1958–2013	No. 2013 (rank/56)	Other annual maxima 1958–2013 (year/number/rank)	Trend 1990–2013	Annual variability 2000–2013
520	161 (1)	2012/132/2 2011/46/3	Increase	High

Annual means 1958–2013	
1958–59	1.5
1960–69	<1
1970–79	1
1980–89	3
1990–99	2
2000–09	9
2010–13	91

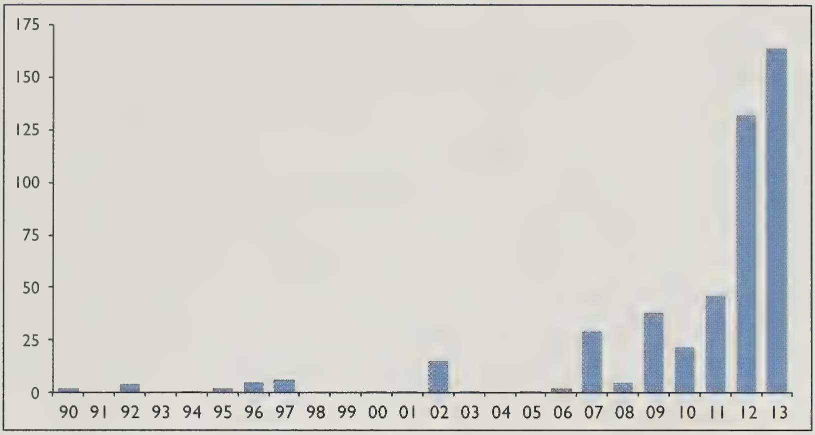


Fig. 8. Annual totals of Glossy Ibises *Plegadis falcinellus* in Britain, 1990–2013.

Until the early decades of the twentieth century, the Glossy Ibis was a fairly frequent visitor to Britain – there are some 340 known records before 1950, of which at least 281 were in England (Brown & Grice 2005; Hudson *et al.* 2013). Yet by 1950, it had declined markedly, and was a rare bird in Britain, something that presumably reflects the loss of wetland habitats in Europe. A mere 92 were recorded in Britain between 1950 and 2006, with more than a third of that total in just two years (18 in 1986 and 15 in 2002, the only double-figure totals). After 2006, numbers began to increase rapidly and the species was removed from the BBRC list at the end of 2012 (fig. 8).

The recent increase in British records seems clearly linked to the re-establishment of the Glossy Ibis as a breeding species in Iberia (in Spain in 1993 and Portugal in 2005); the Spanish population had risen to 6,000 pairs by 2010 (de Juana & Garcia 2015). This is supported by resightings of ringed birds in Britain, which include 39 ringed in Spain and six in France.

There were reports of 225 birds in 2013; once the more obvious duplications had been accounted for, this left 161 individuals, still comfortably a new record total. There were 23 apparently new arrivals in winter (January, February and December) but just two in spring (both, or possibly a single bird, in Sussex). Since 2008, most new arrivals have appeared in September (fig. 9) but a rather later arrival was evident in 2013, with 58 in September and 51 in October and

Steve Young/Birdwatch

11. Glossy Ibises *Plegadis falcinellus*, Doffcocker Lodge, Greater Manchester, October 2013.

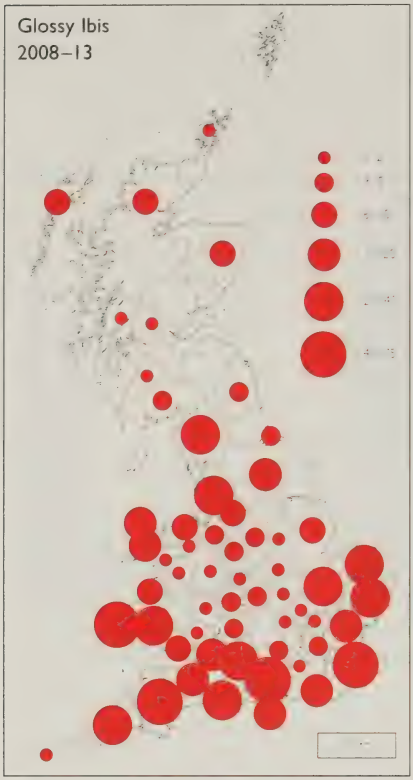


Fig. 10. The distribution of Glossy Ibises *Plegadis falcinellus* in Britain, 2008–13.

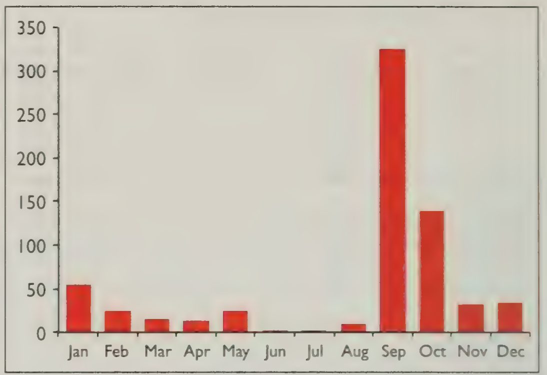


Fig. 9. Arrival dates of Glossy Ibises *Plegadis falcinellus* in Britain by month, 2008–13.

the remainder in November.

There were 60 records of single birds in 2013 but 12 parties of four or more, the largest being 15 at Cotswold Water Park (Wiltshire) on 26th September, 13 at Foulshaw Moss (Cumbria) from 28th September to 4th October, 12 over Leighton Moss (Lancashire & N Merseyside) on 27th September (presumably the same birds seen in Cumbria on the following day), 11 at various sites in Devon on 22nd–24th September and ten at Bagillt (Flintshire) on 1st October. Very few birds were aged but presumably most of the larger groups must have included family parties.

Glossy Ibises were widely distributed across England and Wales in 2013 but remained scarce in Scotland, where the only records were four at Caerlaverock (Dumfries & Galloway), from 30th September to 4th October, one at Loch of Strathbeg (North-east Scotland) on 1st November, eight at various sites in the Outer Hebrides from 25th October into 2014 and two at various sites in Orkney from 17th December into 2014. Fig. 10 shows a similar geographical distribution since 2008.

(Breeds S France & Spain; otherwise, European breeding range centred N & W of Black Sea in Ukraine & Romania, with small, declining population in Balkans. To E, breeds from Volga River to Kazakhstan. Migratory, most wintering E Africa, but W European population winters Morocco & Mediterranean Basin. Resident or dispersive populations occur Africa, S Asia, Australia, E USA & the Caribbean to N South America.)

Honey-buzzard *Pernis apivorus*

Total 1986–2013	No. 2013 (rank/28)	Other annual maxima 1986–2013 (year/number/rank)	Trend 1990–2013	Annual variability 2000–2013
6,408	152 (14)	2000/2,188/1 2008/795/2	None	Very high

Annual means 1986–2013
1986–89
61
1990–99
125
2000–09
437
2010–13
139

Breeding or potentially breeding birds have been excluded but the 2013 total may be an underestimate because of the lack of verified records from some counties – notably Essex where nine fly-overs were reported on the bird information services. A remarkably high proportion of the 2013 records (60 birds, 39%) were in Kent – but most of the remainder were well scattered along the south and east coasts of England north to Yorkshire; five were seen in Wales and seven in Scotland. Sightings were evenly spread between spring and autumn, with 70 in spring (last week of April to first week of July) and 82 in autumn, between the last week of July to 20th October.

(Breeds throughout Europe from Spain to C Finland, & E in C Russia to c. 90°E. Winters sub-Saharan Africa.)

Black Kite *Milvus migrans*

Total 1958–2013	No. 2013 (rank/56)	Other annual maxima 1958–2013 (year/number/rank)	Trend 1990–2013	Annual variability 2000–2013
551	26 (5)	2011/42/1 1994/32/2	Increase	High

Annual means 1958–2013	
1958–59	0
1960–69	0
1970–79	3
1980–89	10
1990–99	15
2000–09	17
2010–13	25

Another productive year reinforced the upward trend apparent since 2001 (see *Brit. Birds* 108: 139–140). The first of the year, at Bough Beech Reservoir (Kent) on 4th March, was followed by four April records, five in May and three in June; with the exception of singles at West Hartford (Northumberland) on 14th–15th May and Faversham (Kent) on 8th–19th June, these were all one-day birds. The 12 autumn arrivals were spread evenly between July and November and one was first seen in December. Three late birds in Kent may have involved just two individuals: Dungeness on 13th–26th November, Sandwich Bay from 30th November to 12th December and Samphire Hoe on 4th–13th December. Black Kites were seen in 13 recording areas; Kent was the top county with ten, the remainder being spread across nine English and three Scottish counties.

(Nominate race breeds throughout Mediterranean Basin & continental Europe except maritime NW & Scandinavia, with most in Spain, France & Germany. To E, breeds European Russia to W Kazakhstan. Most winter Africa. Other races in sub-Saharan Africa, C & E Asia, Indian subcontinent, E & SE Asia & Australia.)

Rough-legged Buzzard *Buteo lagopus*

Total 1986–2013	No. 2013 (rank/28)	Other annual maxima 1986–2013 (year/number/rank)	Trend 1990–2013	Annual variability 2000–2013
1,819	43 (18)	1994/255/1 2011/184/2	None	High

Annual means 1986–2013	
1986–89	47
1990–99	73
2000–09	44
2010–13	115

With just 43 birds reported, the lowest total since 2007, it was a mediocre year for Rough-legged Buzzards in 2013. Reports came from just nine recording areas, all on the east coast, from Shetland to Kent – a typical distribution. Only four were reported as overwintering, although it seems likely some of the 16 birds first seen during January to March had in fact done so. Six new birds were seen in April but none in May. The first of the autumn was on Holy Island (Northumberland) on 8th October, the first of 13 in that month, with four new arrivals in both November and December. Just four were reported as lingering for more than a couple of days, the longest stayers being two at Orfordness (Suffolk) from 16th October into 2014.

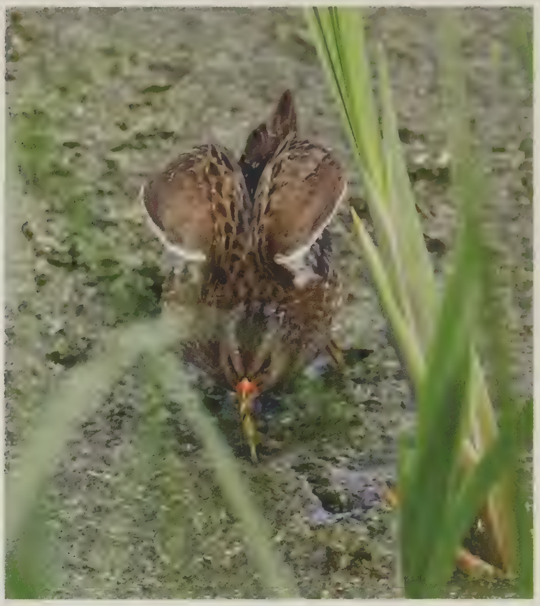
(Circumpolar low Arctic breeding range from mountains of S Scandinavia, E through N Fennoscandia, Russia E & S to Kamchatka, Alaska & N Canada E to Newfoundland. Winters to S of breeding range.)

Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana*

Total 1986–2013	No. 2013 (rank/28)	Other annual maxima 1986–2013 (year/number/rank)	Trend 1990–2013	Annual variability 2000–2013
1,505	29 (25)	1995/119/1 1989/84/2	Decline	Moderate

Annual means 1986–2013	
1986–89	2000–09
72	51
1990–99	2010–13
60	27

The run of poor years for Spotted Crakes in Britain continues and any year with more than 30 records must now be considered a good one. As usual, calling birds reported for just one or two days at a given site, with no further indication of breeding, are included here while those remaining at a particular site for a



James Hanlon

12. Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana*, Oare Marshes, Kent, September 2013.

longer period have been excluded (these are covered in the relevant Rare Breeding Birds Panel report; Holling *et al.* 2015). The first of the spring was at a private site in Berkshire on 6th April, and this was followed by a further seven between April and June. One lingered at East Chevington (Northumberland) from 30th July to 13th September. Eight arrived in August, seven in September and five in October, the last on St Mary's (Scilly) on 28th. The timing of the 2013 records was similar to that of recent years and the age of ten autumn migrants was reported, all of them juveniles.

(Breeds locally in Europe from S Spain & Atlantic regions of coastal France to N Gulf of Bothnia, Finland, E in C Russia to c. 100°E. Some winter Mediterranean Basin, others in sub-Saharan Africa & Indian subcontinent.)

American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica*

Total 1958–2013	No. 2013 (rank/56)	Other annual maxima 1958–2013 (year/number/rank)	Trend 1990–2013	Annual variability 2000–2013
493	31 (2)	2012/39/1 2011/29/3	Increase	Moderate

Annual means 1958–2013	
1958–59	<1
1960–69	<1
1970–79	3
1980–89	7
1990–99	10
2000–09	17
2010–13	29

The series of record-breaking years for this species continues: now nine of the ten highest ranking having occurred in the past ten years. American Golden Plover has always been a predominantly autumn migrant (fig. 11) and 2013 was no different. One on Rosenannon Downs (Cornwall) on 25th February was the only winter record, while three presumably non-breeding birds were seen in June. The first autumn migrant was an adult at Spurn (Yorkshire) on 5th August. Sixteen followed in September of which 11 were aged as adults and four as juveniles; eight in October (those aged reported as four adults and three juveniles), and two juveniles in November, the last at Nanjizal (Cornwall) on 4th–12th. As usual the majority were along the west coast, including five in the Outer Hebrides, four in Argyll and six in Cornwall, while in the east Orkney and Yorkshire recorded three apiece. There were two inland records, at Berry Fen (Cambridgeshire) on 18th June and Blagdon Lake (Avon) on 23rd October.

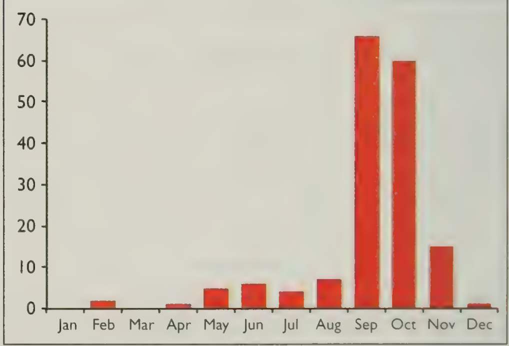


Fig. 11. Arrival dates of American Golden Plovers *Pluvialis dominica* in Britain by month, 2008–13.

(Breeds on coastal tundra from extreme NE Siberia, E across N Alaska & Canada to Baffin Island. Migrates over W Atlantic to wintering grounds in S South America.)

Kentish Plover *Anarhynchus alexandrinus*

Total 1986–2013	No. 2013 (rank/28)	Other annual maxima 1986–2013 (year/number/rank)	Trend 1990–2013	Annual variability 2000–2013
723	8 (28)	1993/59/1 1991 & 1999/42/2=	Decline	Moderate

Annual means 1986–2013	
1986–89	28
1990–99	36
2000–09	20
2010–13	12

The lowest-ever annual total continues the long-term decline (see *Brit. Birds* 107: 162), and the ten-year mean now stands at 16.4. If this trend continues, it will not be too long before Kentish Plover qualifies as a national rarity. Note the complete absence of east-coast records this year, where multiple occurrences were, until recently, almost annual. All records in 2013 are given below:

22nd–28th March, Whitstable (Kent) – male
24th March to 1st April, Ferrybridge (Dorset) – female
25th March to 6th April, Rye Harbour (Sussex) – two (one ringed in Germany on 25th September 2009)
8th April, Sandwich Bay (Kent)
2nd–3rd May, Ferrybridge (Dorset)
6th May, Sandwich Bay (Kent)
30th September, Tresco (Scilly) – juvenile

(Breeds Atlantic coastal regions of Iberian Peninsula N to Netherlands, Germany & Denmark, & Mediterranean Basin & inland lakes to C Asia. Winters coastal regions of Mediterranean Basin, Arabian Peninsula & S & SE Asia N to S Japan.)

Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*

Total 1968–2013	No. 2013 (rank/46)	Other annual maxima 1968–2013 (year/number/rank)	Trend 1990–2013	Annual variability 2000–2013
4,540	90 (26)	2004/309/1 1987/176/2	None	Moderate

Annual means 1968–2013	
1968–69	39
1970–79	77
1980–89	105
1990–99	95
2000–09	122
2010–13	117

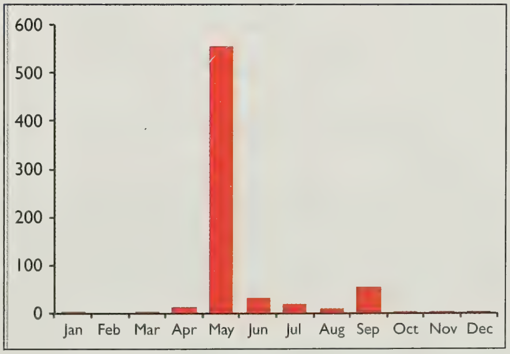


Fig. 12. Arrival dates of Temminck's Stints *Calidris temminckii* in Britain by month, 2008–13.

Almost all Temminck's Stints occur in Britain in spring, in fact the species has one of the most concentrated passage periods of any migrant in this report; almost 80% of all records during 2008–13 were in May (fig. 12). Yet 2013 was a little different, with 67 in spring (April to June) and 23 in autumn (July to September), a rather higher proportion than usual.

There were no new wintering birds this year, although a first-winter at Stockland Reach (Somerset) remained from 2012 until 19th March. Aside from an occasional wintering bird, very few have been recorded in Britain before the last week of April so four at Sandwich Bay (Kent) on 7th–9th April are particularly notable. These and a few others before mid month form a small cluster of early April records and seem likely to have involved birds that overwintered in the Western Palearctic rather than in sub-Saharan Africa where most of the European population winters. Data-logger studies of birds from southern Norway show them remaining in Mali from late August to April/May. Migration distance between Mali and Norway is over 5,000 km and takes about one month to complete, proceeding in stages with regular stops of a few days' duration and longer stays associated with the rigours of a Saharan crossing, an obstacle not faced by birds wintering farther north (Lislevand & Hahn 2015).

Birds in North-east Scotland and Cleveland on 2nd July were presumably the first south-bound migrants, followed by a further three that month, ten in August and eight in September, with the last on 25th at Newington and Potteric Carr (both Yorkshire).

Although there were 52 records of singles, Temminck's Stints are more likely to turn up in small groups than most other scarce migrants: this year two were seen together on nine occasions and three twice while, in addition to the quartet at Sandwich Bay, there were four at Cley (Norfolk) on 7th–9th May and six at Frampton Marsh (Lincolnshire) on 9th–21st May. Birds were seen in 21 recording areas, 18 in England and three in Scotland. The largest county totals were 17 in Yorkshire and 16 in Norfolk, confirming the usual east-coast bias.

(Breeds mountains of S Scandinavia N through Fennoscandia to Barents Sea, N Gulf of Bothnia, & cool temperate Russia E to Chukotskiy Peninsula, E Siberia. Winters S of breeding range from Mediterranean Basin, N Afrotropics, Middle East, S & SE Asia N to Japan.)

White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis*

Total 1958–2013	No. 2013 (rank/56)	Other annual maxima 1958–2013 (year/number/rank)	Trend 1990–2013	Annual variability 2000–2013
563	20 (9)	2005/39/1 2011/30/2	Increase	Moderate

Annual means 1958–2013	
1958–59	1990–99
2	9
1960–69	2000–09
3	18
1970–79	2010–13
6	22
1980–89	
11	

White-rumped Sandpipers were found in ten recording areas in 2013: there were five in Cornwall, three in Lincolnshire, two in Shetland, the Outer Hebrides, Norfolk and Northumberland, and singles in Dorset, Moray & Nairn, Scilly and Yorkshire. This distribution is broadly typical of that of recent years.

An adult at Findhorn Bay (Moray & Nairn) on 10th–14th June was probably a late spring migrant, whereas another adult at Lodmoor (Dorset) on 17th–20th July was the first autumn-passage bird. Another 18 autumn migrants arrived between 22nd August and 12th November; ten of the autumn birds were juveniles and eight were adults. The first juvenile appeared on 7th October, after which there were only two adults, both in November.

(Breeds N Alaska & Arctic Canada, from Mackenzie River E to S Baffin Island. Overflies W Atlantic to winter S South America.)

Gary Thoburn

13. Adult and juvenile White-rumped Sandpipers *Calidris fuscicollis*, Hayle, Cornwall, November 2013.

Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Calidris subruficollis*

Total 1958–2013	No. 2013 (rank/56)	Other annual maxima 1958–2013 (year/number/rank)	Trend 1990–2013	Annual variability 2000–2013
1,130	32 (13)	2011/97/1 2010/63/2	Increase	Moderate

Annual means 1958–2013	
1958–59	1
1960–69	3
1970–79	21
1980–89	19
1990–99	15
2000–09	32
2010–13	62

This was an unexceptional year, and the total was the lowest since 2004. Just four arrived in spring – singles in Argyll in May and June, Shetland in May and Anglesey in June. The remaining 28 were autumn migrants, occurring between 29th July and 10th October. The autumn passage of Buff-breasted Sandpipers is typically highly concentrated in September, which accounted for almost 70% of records during 2008–13 (fig. 13). In 2013, there was one in July, six in August, 18 in September and three in October. Of those where the age was provided, three autumn birds were adults and 11 were juveniles, the first on Davidstow Airfield (Cornwall) on 26th August. Numerically, Cornwall and Scilly have outshone all other recording areas in recent years but relatively few appeared there in 2013 – just two in each area. Scotland accounted for 19 of the 32, mostly in the Outer Hebrides (seven) and Orkney (four). The single Welsh record was at Cemlyn Bay (Anglesey) on 20th June, while one at Rutland Water (Leicestershire & Rutland) was the only record in an inland county.

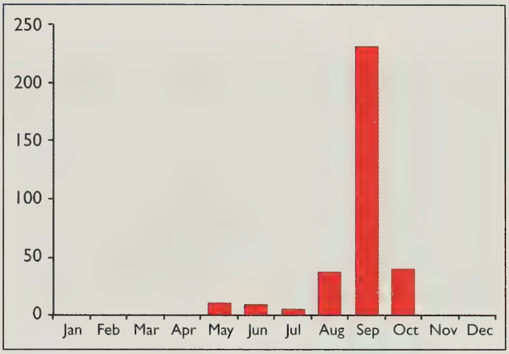


Fig. 13. Arrival dates of Buff-breasted Sandpipers *Calidris subruficollis* in Britain by month, 2008–13.

(Breeds Chukotskiy Peninsula & Wrangel Island, E Siberia, & Arctic North America from N Alaska to Yukon, Northwest Territories & Queen Elizabeth Islands, Canada. Most migrate S through Midwest USA, with a few following Atlantic seaboard, to winter on grasslands of Uruguay, Paraguay & Argentina.)

Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos*

Total 1968–2013	No. 2013 (rank/46)	Other annual maxima 1968–2013 (year/number/rank)	Trend 1990–2013	Annual variability 2000–2013
3,755	187 (4)	2011/266/1 2012/208/2	Increase	Low

Annual means 1968–2013	
1968–69	16
1970–79	45
1980–89	70
1990–99	57
2000–09	122
2010–13	198

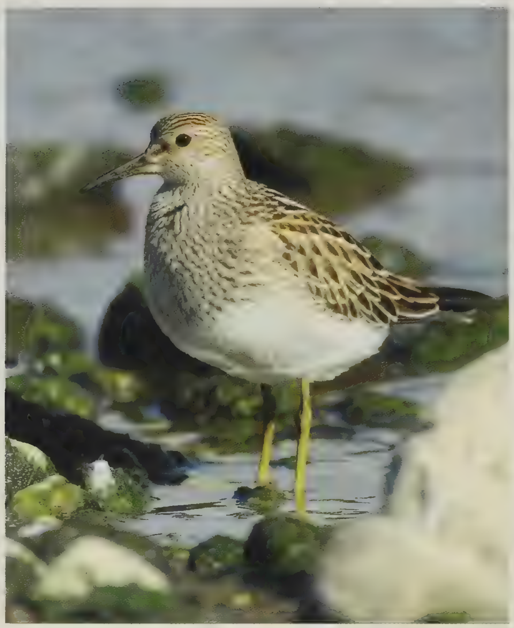
In a pattern similar to that of American Golden Plover, seven of the ten highest annual totals of Pectoral Sandpipers have now occurred in the past ten years and the 187 in 2013 made that the fourth-best year to date.

Following two in Northumberland in April, the first on 19th, a further 38 were seen in spring up until mid June. Birds in Lincolnshire, Yorkshire and Cornwall in the first week of July may have been the first autumn migrants, but most of the 16 in July were in the latter half of the month; two were reported as juveniles (the first on 15th) and ten as adults. A further 23 followed in August (six adults and four juveniles) and 95 in September (three adults and 26 juveniles). Fourteen birds were seen in October, all of them juveniles, the last on 26th.

Pectoral Sandpipers were seen in 21 recording areas in 2013, with five in Scotland and the rest in England, with a typically wide distribution (fig. 14). The highest county totals were 17 in Yorkshire, 16 in Norfolk and the Outer

Hebrides, and 12 in Cornwall and Northumberland.

(Breeds Arctic Siberia from Taimyr Peninsula E to Chukotskiy Peninsula, & North America from Alaska E to Southampton Island & S shore of Hudson Bay, Canada. Migrates through North America to winter South America from Peru & N Argentina to Patagonia.)



14. Juvenile Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos*, Forfar Loch, Angus & Dundee, September 2013.

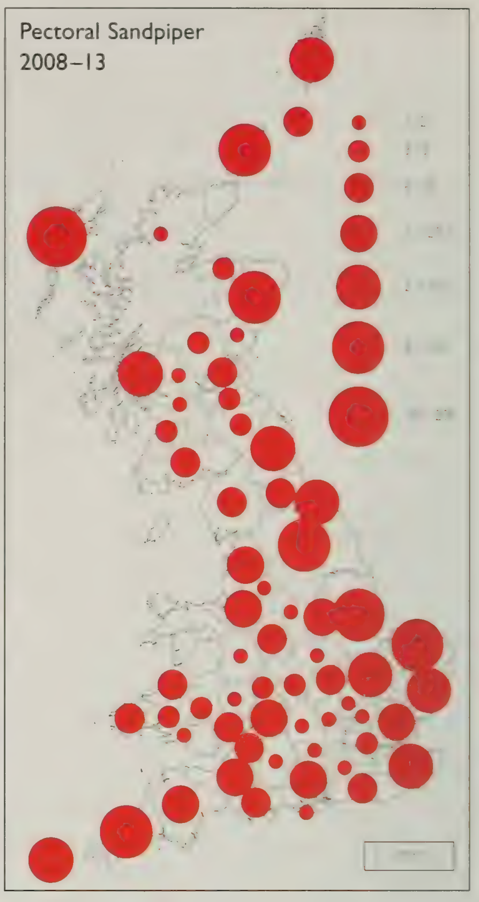
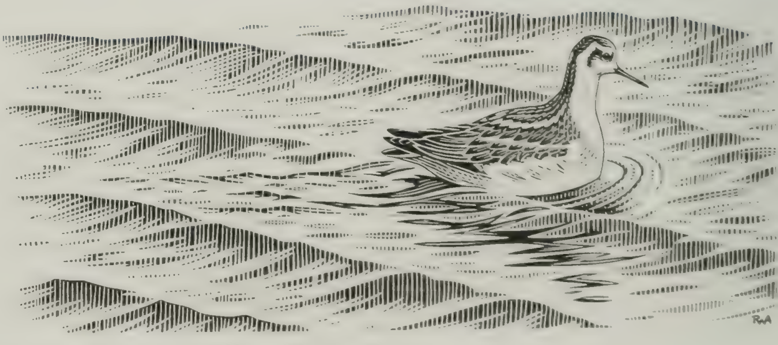


Fig. 14. Distribution of Pectoral Sandpipers *Calidris melanotos* in Britain, 2008–13.

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*

Total 1986–2013	No. 2013 (rank/28)	Other annual maxima 1986–2013 (year/number/rank)	Trend 1990–2013	Annual variability 2000–2013
910	32 (13)	1999/71/1 1989/47/2	None	Low

Annual means 1986–2013
1986–89 36
1990–99 34
2000–09 28
2010–13 37



Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*

Annual numbers of migrant Red-necked Phalaropes have been the most stable of any scarce migrant species for nearly 30 years. The earliest arrival, an adult female on 16th May at Coombe

Hill Meadows (Gloucestershire), was unusual in that it stayed in the area until 20th June. Six more followed in May, 17 in June and one in July. Of the 25 spring migrants, 15 were reported as females and six as males. As usual, far fewer were seen in autumn, just seven between 10th August and 2nd October, of which one was an adult.

(Circumpolar low Arctic breeding range: N Scotland, Iceland, Fennoscandia, Svalbard, N Russia, Alaska, N Canada and Greenland. Migrates overland to winter in cold current upwellings in tropical seas, particularly off W Pacific coast of South America, also Arabian Sea, Sundas & Moluccas, Indonesia, E to Papua New Guinea.)

Grey Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius*

Total 1986–2013	No. 2013 (rank/28)	Other annual maxima 1986–2013 (year/number/rank)		Trend 1990–2013	Annual variability 2000–2013
9,063	174 (17)	2008/1,842/1	2001/1,125/2	None	Very High

Annual means 1986–2013
1986–89 283
1990–99 168
2000–09 487
2010–13 346

In stark contrast to the preceding species, numbers of Grey Phalarope are among the most variable of any scarce migrant – perhaps unsurprisingly, in that almost all are seawatching records and the species' occurrence in British waters is highly dependent upon weather conditions in the Atlantic. For the second consecutive year, numbers were below average. Twenty were seen in winter (January, February and December), mostly late in the year, and four in spring between 23rd March and 1st April. A handful appeared in August and rather more in September but, as usual, numbers peaked in October and passage was largely spent by mid November. The highest day-counts were both off St Ives (Cornwall): five on 16th September and nine on 28th October. The largest county totals were 29 in Cornwall, 18 in Scilly, 14 in Pembrokeshire and 12 in both the Outer Hebrides and Yorkshire.

(Circumpolar high Arctic breeding range on coastal tundra, from Iceland and Svalbard E across Arctic Russia and islands, to N coastal Alaska and parts of N Canada and W Greenland. Mostly pelagic in winter at edge of Gulf Stream from North Carolina to Florida, USA, & cold current upwellings off W coast of Africa, & Pacific coast of South America.)

Kit Day

15. First-winter Grey Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius*, Walberswick, Suffolk, December 2013.

White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*

Total 1958–2013	No. 2013 (rank/56)	Other annual maxima 1958–2013 (year/number/rank)	Trend 1990–2013	Annual variability 2000–2013
891	7 (49)	1992/49/1 1970/37/2	None	Low

Annual means 1958–2013	
1958–59	6
1960–69	11
1970–79	22
1980–89	14
1990–99	19
2000–09	17
2010–13	14

Ray Scally

White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*

The total of seven recorded in 2013 was the lowest since 1990. All records are set out below, and they fit a familiar temporal pattern – most records are in May, August and September.

20th May, Ferry Meadows (Cambridgeshire) – second-summer
31st May, Kirkby-on-Bain (Lincolnshire)
10th–11th August, East Chevington and Bothal Pond (Northumberland) – juvenile
22nd August, Cliffe (Kent)
25th August, Hanningfield Reservoir (Essex)
6th–7th September, Attenborough (Nottinghamshire) – juvenile
13th–16th September, Mudeford Quay and Swineham GP (Dorset) – juvenile

(Breeds Poland to Hungary, with sporadic breeding to W. Breeds commonly from Belarus, W Russia & Ukraine E to S Siberia, N Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Russian Far East & NE China, but absent from large areas. Winters throughout sub-Saharan Africa, Indian subcontinent, SE Asia & N Australia.)

Sabine's Gull *Xema sabini*

Total 1968–2013	No. 2013 (rank/46)	Other annual maxima 1968–2013 (year/number/rank)	Trend 1990–2013	Annual variability 2000–2013
6,773	110 (18)	1987/710/1 2011/608/2	None	High

Annual means 1968–2013	
1968–69	15
1970–79	58
1980–89	203
1990–99	141
2000–09	174
2010–13	247

Sabine's Gulls are quite rare in spring, so adults seen on Scilly on 17th April, up to three in Cornwall the following day and one during a pelagic trip 10 km off Scilly on 24th June, plus an immature off East Glamorgan on 24th May represents a decent haul. Although early records are not unprecedented, the number of adults and their occurrence in the southwest was notable; they turned up following a series of Atlantic depressions, which culminated in a deep low-pressure system over southern Ireland on 16th April. In contrast, unremarkable seawatching conditions in autumn 2013 resulted in a below-average total for that season. One on 26th July was the first of 104 birds, spread fairly evenly between the main months of August, September and October, with the last on 18th November. Of those where the age was specified, 53 were reported as adults, 30 as juveniles (the first on 7th September) and one as a first-summer.

It has generally been assumed that the preponderance of autumn sightings in Britain relates to a difference in migration routes between spring and autumn. Data-logger studies of adult birds from the small northeast Greenland population support this, revealing a rather regimented pattern of movement during the annual migration of over 30,000 km. All the tagged birds wintered in the Benguela Current, an ocean upwelling zone off southwest Africa, where they remained for an average of 152 days after arriving in mid November. In spring they moved rapidly north to stage in the Canary Current, an upwelling zone off West Africa, where they remained for an average of 19 days. From mid April and through May they took a direct route towards the breeding areas, well away from UK waters.

In autumn a more easterly route is used and the tagged birds lingered in the rich waters off southwest Europe (such as the Bay of Biscay and the Celtic Sea) for an average of 45 days from mid August, before moving south to the wintering area. As the number of birds known to occur in these staging areas far exceeds the small breeding population in northeast Greenland, this suggests that many birds from the much larger population from high-Arctic Canada follow a similar migratory strategy (Stenhouse *et al.* 2012).

(Circumpolar high Arctic breeding range on coastal tundra from Svalbard, E across Arctic Russia and islands, to W & N coastal Alaska, parts of N Canada & N Greenland. Winters in South Atlantic off W Africa, off SE Africa in Indian Ocean, and in Pacific Ocean from N Mexico to Peru.)

Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*

Total 1958–2013	No. 2013 (rank/56)	Other annual maxima 1958–2013 (year/number/rank)	Trend 1990–2013	Annual variability 2000–2013
1,892	18 (31)	1992/108/1 1990/94/2	Decline	Moderate

Annual means 1958–2013
1958–59
0
1960–69
0
1970–79
4
1980–89
47
1990–99
77
2000–09
54
2010–13
18

Of the 34 Ring-billed Gulls reported in 2013, ten were returning birds, including the Gosport (Hampshire) individual for its 11th winter in December, and a further six were judged to have been seen earlier in 2013. There was a small increase in the number of immature birds reported, with nine first-winters and one second-winter, the largest number since 2008; the days of double-figure counts of young birds seem long gone. Records were widely scattered over 16 recording areas – 11 in England, three in Scotland and two in Wales. All but two were in coastal counties: a 3CY bird in Bedfordshire in March and a 2CY in Leicestershire & Rutland in April (plate 16) Apart from Dorset and Shetland with two apiece, no recording area reported more than one individual.

(Breeds temperate North America from British Columbia E to Maritime Provinces, Canada, S to NE California, Nevada & Wyoming to Michigan, also N Maine, USA. Winters to S of breeding range south to S Mexico & Gulf of Mexico, & inland on Great Lakes.)

Kevin du Rose

16. First-summer Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*, Melton CP, Leicestershire & Rutland, April 2013.

Alpine Swift *Apus melba*

Total 1958–2013	No. 2013 (rank/56)	Other annual maxima 1958–2013 (year/number/rank)	Trend 1990–2013	Annual variability 2000–2013
608	11 (19)	2010/48/1 2002/27/2	None	High

Annual means 1958–2013	
1958–59	3
1960–69	6
1970–79	8
1980–89	12
1990–99	13
2000–09	13
2010–13	22

In what was a rather poor year for Alpine Swifts, other than a small influx in mid April, none was seen outside England. Details of all the records are as follows:

14th April, Skinngrove (Cleveland)
14th April, Marton Mere, Blackpool (Lancashire & N Merseyside)
16th–17th April, Scarborough (Yorkshire)
16th–18th April, various coastal sites (Yorkshire)
17th April, Dungeness (Kent), presumed same Lade Pits, Greatstone on 18th
17th April, Cliftonville (Kent)
17th April, Lopham Fen (Norfolk)
20th May, Ruan Lanihorne (Cornwall)
24th May, Spurn (Yorkshire)
3rd August, Gibraltar Point (Lincolnshire)
5th August, Spurn (Yorkshire)

(Breeds discontinuously from NW Africa, throughout S Europe, N to C France & Switzerland, to Ukraine. To E, breeds locally through Turkey & Caucasus to Iran, Afghanistan & N Pakistan. Winter range unknown, but assumed to lie within Afrotropics or W India.)

Hoopoe *Upupa epops*

Total 1968–2013	No. 2013 (rank/46)	Other annual maxima 1968–2013 (year/number/rank)	Trend 1990–2013	Annual variability 2000–2013
5,358	98 (32)	1968/218/1 1980/188/2	None	Low

Annual means 1968–2013			
1968–69	147	1990–99	119
1970–79	113	2000–09	93
1980–89	133	2010–13	124

Hoopoes were seen in 47 recording areas, roughly similar to the two previous years. Most occurred in the southern half of England, eight were found in Wales, seven reached Scotland and one appeared on the Isle of Man, but no county reached a double-figure tally. Spring records predominated – there were 64 between March and June – with 32 in autumn, from July to November. Two birds were seen in winter, at Hamworthy (Dorset) from 23rd January to 19th March and Pensarn/Abergele (Denbighshire) on 8th–26th December – slightly fewer than in recent years.

(Breeds widely throughout warm & temperate regions of Europe N to N France & N Poland, sometimes N to Baltic States, E through S Russia, C Asia & N China. Some winter Mediterranean Basin & N Africa, but most winter in sub-Saharan Africa, S & SE Asia.)

European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*

Total 1958–2013	No. 2013 (rank/56)	Other annual maxima 1958–2013 (year/number/rank)	Trend 1990–2013	Annual variability 2000–2013
1,381	30 (17)	1997/132/1 2002/104/2	None	Moderate

The total of 30 in 2013 was the lowest since 2003 and, although average numbers since 2000 are higher than previously, there is no clear trend in either direction. The 26 spring arrivals appeared between 28th April and 14th June, but the overwhelming majority were in May. Autumn records consisted of three in August and the last bird of the year, on 8th October at Land's End (Cornwall). Unusually, all records were of single birds with the exception of ten at Folkestone (Kent) on 14th May.

(Breeds NW Africa & Mediterranean Europe, N to C France & N Ukraine, occasionally N to S Sweden & the Netherlands, E through C Asia to E Kazakhstan. Winters throughout sub-Saharan Africa, & locally India and S Arabian Peninsula.)

Annual means 1958–2013

1958–59	7
1960–69	4
1970–79	6
1980–89	20
1990–99	38
2000–09	44
2010–13	62

Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*

Total 1986–2013	No. 2013 (rank/28)	Other annual maxima 1986–2013 (year/number/rank)	Trend 1990–2013	Annual variability 2000–2013
8,457	426 (3)	2008/491/1 2011/459/2	Increase	Low

Annual means 1986–2013

1986–89	311
1990–99	259
2000–09	301
2010–13	405

Another high total in 2013 confirmed the increasing trend in numbers apparent since 1990; the three highest annual totals have all occurred since 2008. This contrasts with a moderate decline in the European breeding population, and the recent Birds of Conservation Concern report, which shows that Wryneck is now a former, rather than a rare breeder in Britain (PECBMS 2014; Eaton *et al.* 2015).

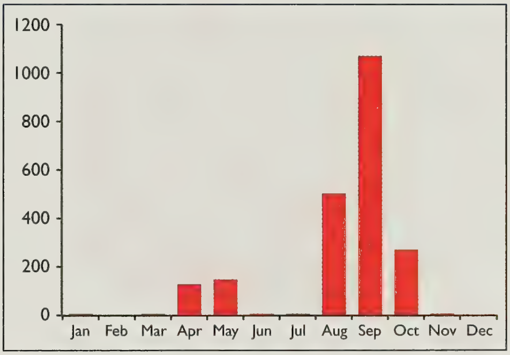


Fig. 15. Arrival dates of Wrynecks *Jynx torquilla* in Britain by month, 2008–13.

None was seen in March 2013 but April brought seven arrivals, the first on 15th, and a further 23 followed in May with the last found on 31st. The first of the autumn was seen on 19th August, the first of 188 recorded that month, followed by 161 in September, 44 in October and three in November, the last of the year being at Land's End (Cornwall) on 17th November. This marked concentration in autumn is

17. Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*, Wendover, Buckinghamshire, September 2013.

Mike Wallen

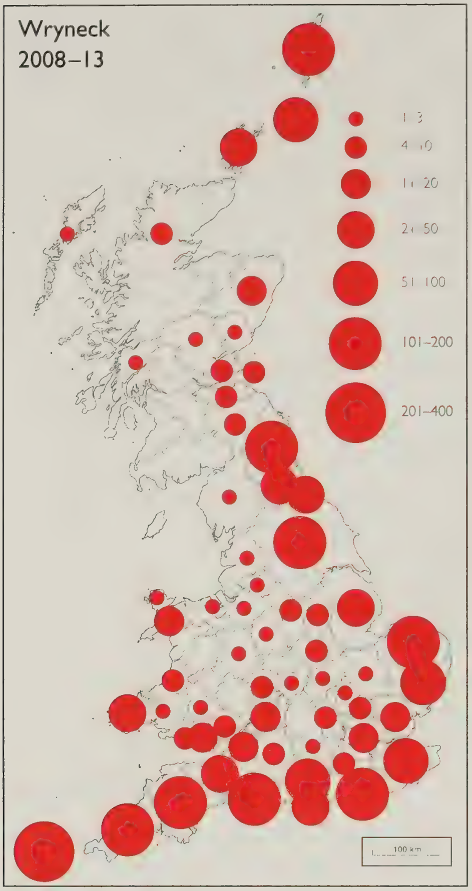


Fig. 16. Distribution of Wrynecks *Jynx torquilla* in Britain, 2008–13.

typical of the pattern in recent years (fig. 15).

Wrynecks were found in 46 recording areas. Eight of these were in Scotland, which amassed a modest grand total of 22 birds, Shetland being the best county with nine. It was a similar situation in Wales: 23 records in six counties with Pembrokeshire accounting for 14. The bulk of the records were in England, concentrated along the east and south coasts, with 68 in Norfolk, 40 in Yorkshire, 38 in Scilly, 27 in Cornwall, 25 in Kent and 21 in Dorset; a pattern which is typical of that in recent years (fig. 16).

About three-quarters of all records involved single birds but twos and threes were not uncommon during east-coast falls. Arrivals this year produced some unusually large counts, including nine at Scolt Head and 15 at Blakeney Point (both Norfolk) on 25th August and a remarkable 27 at Spurn (Yorkshire) on 25th September.

(Breeds throughout Europe from S Spain to N Fennoscandia, Russia E to Sakhalin, & Hokkaido, Japan. Some winter in Mediterranean Basin, otherwise winters widely throughout Africa, and S & SE Asia.)

Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus*

Total 1958–2013	No. 2013 (rank/56)	Other annual maxima 1958–2013 (year/number/rank)	Trend 1990–2013	Annual variability 2000–2013
825	9 (31)	1992/125/1 2008/47/2	None	High

Annual means 1958–2013	
1958–59	9
1960–69	5
1970–79	15
1980–89	14
1990–99	24
2000–09	17
2010–13	15

Below-average numbers were recorded for the third consecutive year but there is as yet no indication of any longer-term trend. All 2013 records are detailed below; as usual, most were seen in spring.

25th–26th April, St Martin's (Scilly) – adult female
2nd–3rd May, Ouse Washes (Cambridgeshire) – adult male
3rd May to 5th June, Lakenheath Fen (Suffolk) – adult male
21st May, Holt (Norfolk) – male
1st–10th June, Ouse Fen (Cambridgeshire) – female
16th June, Lyddington (Leicestershire & Rutland) – adult male
23rd June, Marston Vale Country Park (Bedfordshire) – male
27th August, Felixstowe (Suffolk)
12th October, Bawdsey (Suffolk) – adult male

(Breeds in forested steppes of E Europe from E Hungary to temperate Russia, E to Baikal region. Migratory, wintering SW Africa.)

Acknowledgments

Thanks are due to all the county recorders and others who sent in records and, of course, the many birders who submitted their records for publication in county bird reports, without whom none of this would have been possible. The role of county recorders and local records committees is absolutely vital in ensuring that reports are scrutinised and that only confirmed records make it to publication. The BirdGuides database proved invaluable in filling gaps in records received, and special thanks are due to the Scottish Birds Records Committee and the Welsh Records Panel who adjudicate records in their respective countries of most of the species considered here; their publications can be accessed at **www.the-soc.org.uk/bird-recording/records-committee** and **www.birdsinwales.org.uk/rare/wrp.htm**

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Appendix 1. Additional and corrected records.

When dealing with around 5,000 records a year it is inevitable that some errors creep in and we are grateful to those recorders who have contacted us to correct them. Most commonly, these involve records that were not received by recorders in time to be included in the reports and, less frequently, those that were published when they had not been validated by the relevant records committee. All amendments have been incorporated into the national database and the statistics presented here updated. There is not space to publish all corrections but those felt to be most significant are listed below (they are additional records unless stated otherwise).

Outer Hebrides

Purple Heron: St Kilda, 14th April 2011.
White-rumped Sandpiper: two adults, South Uist, 18th–23rd September 2012.

Shetland

Rough-legged Buzzard: Unst, 12th February to 2nd March 2012; Unst, 10th May 2012.
Black Kite: Virkie, 7th April 2012.
Buff-breasted Sandpiper: Foula, 9th–10th September 2012, different from the one found later that month.
Pectoral Sandpiper: juvenile, Scatness, 24th September 2012.

Pembrokeshire

On Skokholm, the three birds published as American Golden Plovers on 16th–21st September 2011 were in fact Pectoral Sandpipers.

Cambridgeshire

Red-footed Falcon: Colne Fen GP, first-summer male, 4th–13th June 2012.

From the Rarities Committee's files

giving nature a home

Rare subspecies in Britain

Andy Stoddart, on behalf of BBRC

'The purpose of the trinomial system is an obvious one, yet that system is so sharp a tool, that without great care in handling, one is apt to cut his fingers with it.' Elliott Coues, 1884.

Abstract This paper updates BBRC's approach to the recording of rare subspecies in Britain. Building on the work of Kehoe (2006), it summarises the history of BBRC's treatment of rare subspecies, reports on developments since 2006, introduces an updated suite of subspecies accounts on the BBRC website (www.bbrc.org.uk) and sets out the Committee's approach to evidence requirements and publication. Also provided is a new list of subspecies considered and some proposed indicative evidence requirements for each.

Introduction

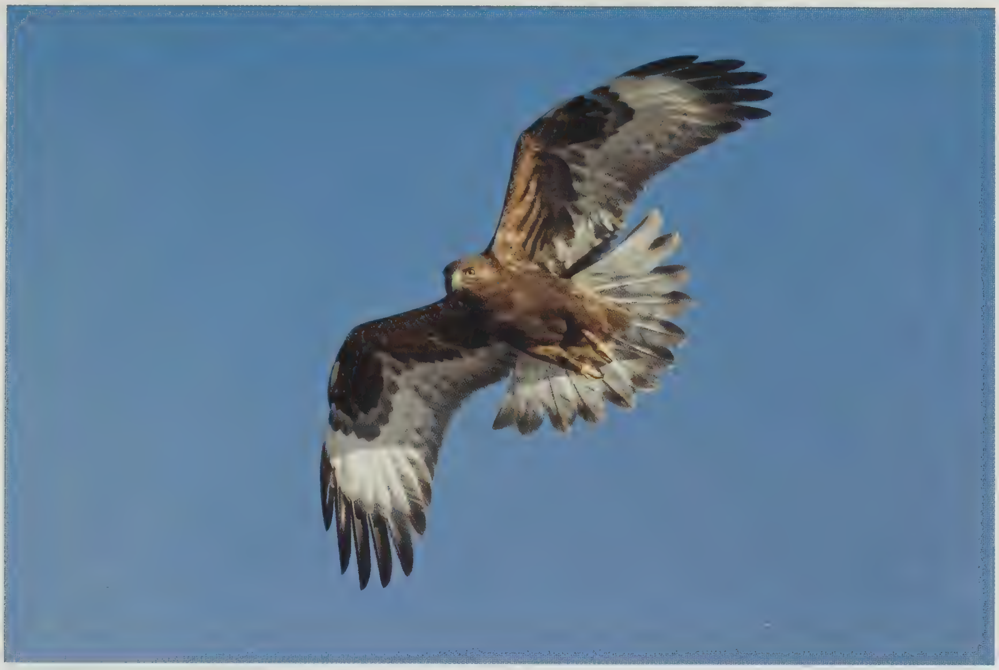
The concept of the subspecies has featured prominently in the ornithological literature since at least the mid-nineteenth century. It was comprehensively embraced in the *Handbook* (Witherby *et al.* 1938–41) and the discussion of geographical variation was also an important component of its successor, *BWP*.

From the 1970s, interest in subspecies also began to grow among amateur birdwatchers, fuelled largely by the availability of better-quality binoculars and the increasingly widespread use of telescopes. Since 2000, the availability of digital cameras and sound-recording equipment has enabled observers to record previously unavailable levels of detail in the field. It has now become possible to capture minutiae such as ring numbers and details of wing formula without the need to examine the bird in the hand, and the precise structure and frequency of songs and calls.

Meanwhile, in the laboratory, DNA analysis can enable some of the most subtle subspecies to be identified, while techniques such as stable-hydrogen isotope analysis have been used to determine the origin of potential vagrants. Genetic analysis has also revolutionised our understanding of avian taxonomy, with an increasing number of subspecies being promoted to full species status as a result.

Despite these developments, some basic difficulties inherent in the subspecies concept remain. Whereas some subspecies may be highly distinctive – and potential candidates for treatment as full species – others are barely diagnosable, at least in the field, and may represent little more than an arbitrary point in a complex pattern of clinal variation.

The identification of many subspecies is therefore beset with difficulty and, in a vagrant context, can be speculative at best. The potential for conflict between the subtleties of many subspecies and the burden of proof demanded by a records committee is obvious, and it is perhaps inevitable that attempting to apply a rigid assessment framework will not always be straightforward. As observed over 100 years ago by Elliott Coues (one of the earliest champions of the trinomial system), engaging with subspecies carries with it a health warning!



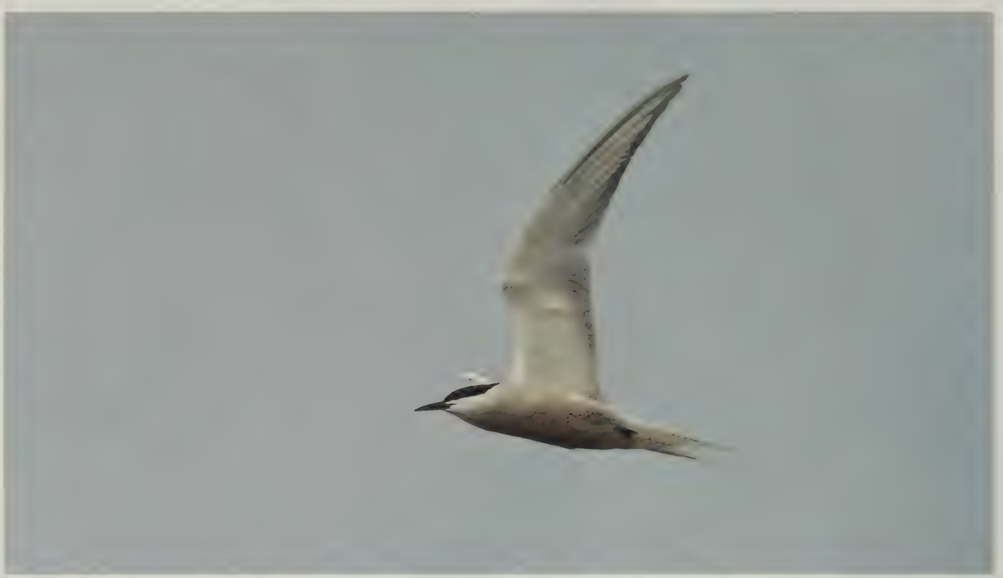
Darren Clark

18. Juvenile dark-morph 'Rough-legged Hawk' *Buteo lagopus sanctijohannis*, Idaho, USA, December 2011. Rough-legged Buzzards of the Nearctic subspecies *sanctijohannis* are dimorphic, occurring in a pale form similar to Palearctic birds and a less common dark form (shown here). 'Rough-legged Hawk' is not on the British List but it is a potential vagrant and occurrences here have been suspected. There are confirmed records of dark-morph birds from Iceland, the Faeroes, the Azores and Ireland; and there are also records of pale-morph Rough-legged Buzzards from these west European outposts on dates and in weather circumstances highly suggestive of a Nearctic origin (Mullarney & Murphy 2005; Jensen 2006). The firm identification of pale-morph *sanctijohannis* rests on biometrics but dark-morph birds are more striking, although they would need to be distinguished from other dark-morph *Buteo* taxa, e.g. 'Steppe Buzzard' *B. buteo vulpinus* and Long-legged Buzzard *B. rufinus*.

Rare subspecies and BBRC

Despite the continuing challenges posed by subspecies, it became obvious during the 1990s that they would need to feature more prominently in BBRC's work. During most of the first 50 years of its existence, the Committee had paid relatively little attention to the subject. There was no systematic approach to rare subspecies: a few particularly distinctive subspecies, such as 'Black Brant' *Branta bernicla nigricans* and 'Siberian Stonechat' (then) *Saxicola torquata maura/stejnegeri*, were considered by BBRC; others, such as 'Black-bellied Dipper' *Cinclus c. cinclus* and 'Northern Long-tailed Tit' *Aegithalos c. caudatus*, equally distinctive and which also appeared to be genuinely rare, were not being assessed and the records published at a national level. Yet as the new millennium approached, identification research was increasingly focused on less distinctive subspecies, many of which were rarer than some full species dealt with by the Committee. A more comprehensive and proactive approach was clearly required.

That new approach was finally published in 2006 (Kehoe 2006). This paper identified for the first time all those subspecies of regularly occurring British species (i.e. those not otherwise dealt with by BBRC) that were considered to qualify as national rarities. This listing included those rare subspecies already on the British List; those suspected or assumed to be occurring but so far unconfirmed; and those with clear potential to occur in future. The diagnosability of these taxa was discussed and evidence requirements proposed for each. The subspecies identification of full species dealt with by BBRC (e.g. Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* and Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe hispanica*) fell outside the scope of the paper.



Baz Scampion

19. Adult Common Tern *Sterna hirundo longipennis*, Kamchatka, Russia, June 2009. With a dark bill and legs and smoky underparts, summer-plumage adult Common Terns of the East Asian subspecies *longipennis* are both very beautiful and quite different from European birds. There are biometric differences too, with *longipennis* being on average shorter-billed and longer-winged than nominate *hirundo*. At present, *longipennis* is not on the British List but birds with an apparently complete suite of *longipennis* features have been recorded here (Darby 2011; Nixon 2011). A number of claims have been submitted and are currently under consideration. Birds showing intermediate characters from the intergrade zone with nominate *hirundo* are a possible source of difficulty, as are dark-billed nominate birds, although whether the latter could fully match the appearance of *longipennis* remains to be established.

Following the 2006 paper, a wider range of subspecies has been considered and a growing number of accepted records published in the BBRC annual reports. Some of these have been new to Britain and thus have been assessed by BOURC in the same way that new species are treated. Rare subspecies or subspecies pairs/groups added to the British List since 2006 include the following: Canada Goose *Branta canadensis interior/parvipes*, 'Thayer's Gull' *Larus glaucoides thayeri*, 'Asian Red-rumped Swallow' *Cecropis daurica daurica/japonica*, 'Eastern Grasshopper Warbler' *Locustella naevia straminea/mongolica*, Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca sibirica*, 'Eastern Black Redstart' *Phoenicurus ochruros phoenicuroides/rufiventris/xerophilus* and 'Amur Wagtail' *Motacilla alba leucopsis*. Today, subspecies are firmly on BBRC's agenda.

The Committee has maintained a cautious approach, however. For many subspecies, the evidence requirements are, for the reasons outlined above, significantly more rigorous than for many full species, while a potential 'first' for Britain must be considered by BOURC as well, and will have a particularly challenging acceptance threshold to cross. In practice, therefore, the Committee has tended to accept only those individuals showing 'classic' field characters or, in some cases, only those identifiable by additional evidence such as biometrics, a ringing recovery or DNA analysis. It has also been prepared to wait for the results of identification research to become available. Inevitably, this has attracted some criticism, with the Committee being accused of being too conservative or too slow to react, yet its view remains that a measured approach, grounded in the most up-to-date literature, is more likely to produce decisions that will stand the test of time.

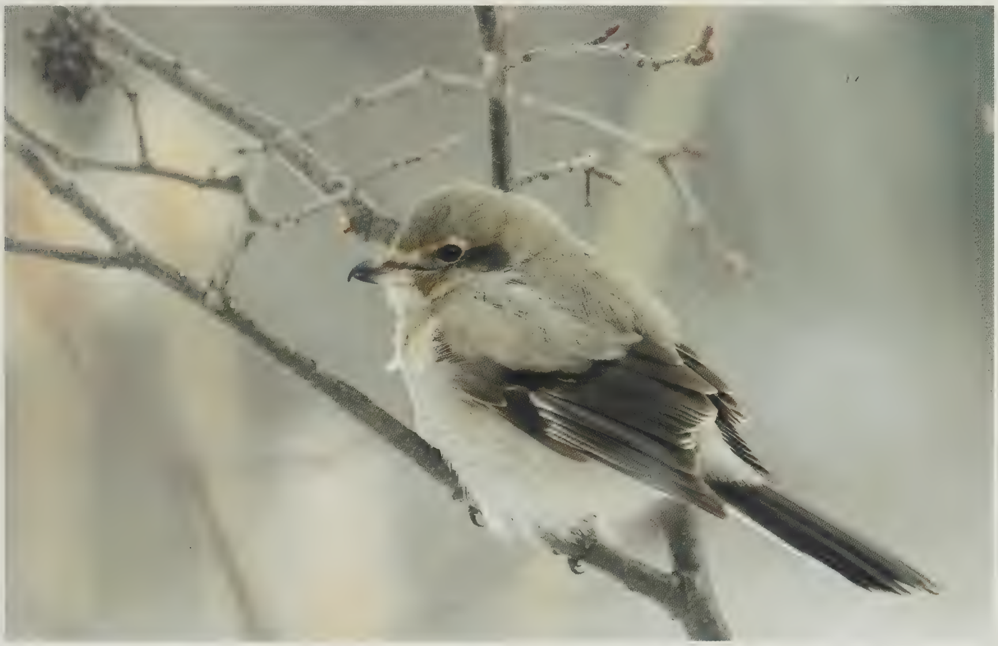
This approach has paid dividends with, for example, 'Northern Eider' *Somateria mollissima borealis*, where the emergence of a clearer (albeit more stringent) set of criteria (Hellquist 2014) has enabled a backlog of submissions to be dealt with. 'Baltic Gull' *Larus f. fuscus* provides another example. It is recognised that the true status in Britain of this subspecies is being understated but, given the ample warnings in the literature over its diagnosability in a vagrant context, the caution exercised to date seems warranted. However, the criteria set out by Altenburg *et al.* (2011) now provide an opportunity to accept claims of unringed second-calendar-year birds based on detailed notes (including moult analysis) and good-quality photographs.

Shifting ground

Kehoe's 2006 paper represented a major step forward in defining BBRC's position on rare subspecies. Almost ten years on, however, there have inevitably been many changes to the context in which the Committee works.

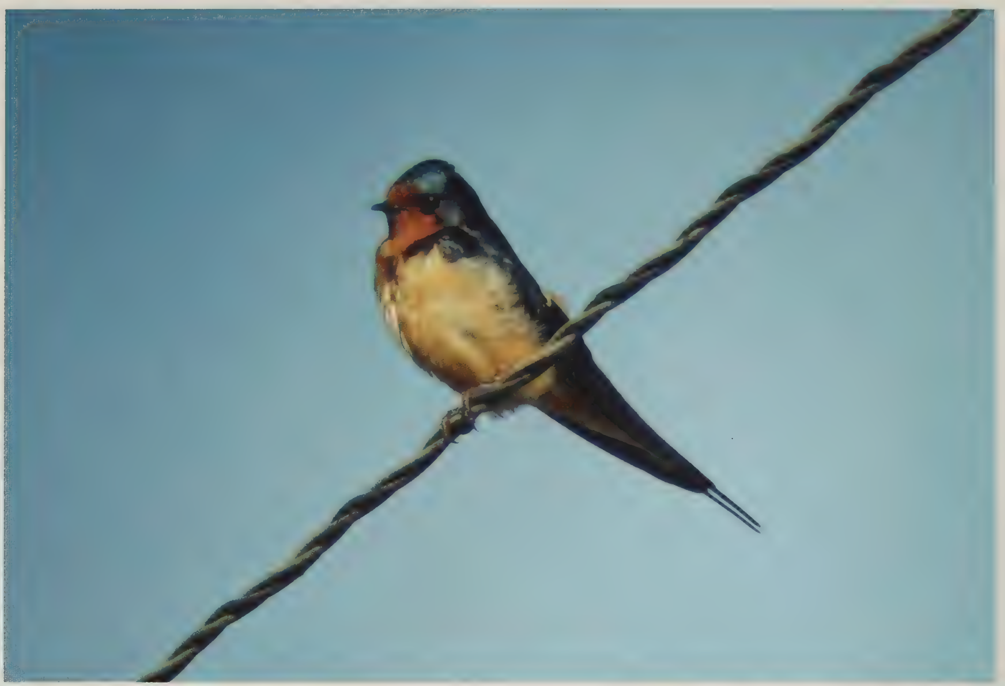
Taxonomic changes announced by BOURC have elevated ten former rare subspecies (all either previously on the British List or now admitted) to full species status: Scopoli's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea*, Pacific Diver *Gavia pacifica*, Northern Harrier *Circus hudsonius*, Wilson's Snipe *Gallinago delicata*, Hudsonian Whimbrel *Numenius hudsonicus*, Cabot's Tern *Sterna acuflavida*, American Herring Gull *Larus smithsonianus*, Siberian Stonechat *Saxicola maurus*, Green Warbler *Phylloscopus nitidus* and Moltoni's Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia subalpina*. Although all are still dealt with by BBRC, these taxa no longer fall within the scope of its work on subspecies.

There have also been a number of changes to the rare subspecies and subspecies pairs/groups included on the British List. While the seven listed previously have been added since 2006, ten have been removed following BOURC reviews: 'Northern Eider' *S. m. borealis*, Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis atricapillus*, Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus pallescens*, Ring Ouzel *Turdus torquatus alpestris*/*amicorum*, 'Ehrenberg's



Barbara D'Arpino

20. First-winter 'Northern Shrike' *Lanius excubitor borealis*, Ontario, Canada, January 2012. This Great Grey Shrike of the Nearctic subspecies *borealis* shows extensive brown hues in the upperparts, strong vermiculations on the underparts, a small white wing-patch restricted to the primaries and little white in the outer tail. Although striking, this appearance can be closely matched by the Siberian subspecies *L. e. sibiricus*. Neither of these two subspecies has been claimed in Britain but *borealis* has reached the Azores and *sibiricus* has occurred as close as Norway. Both are therefore potential vagrants but their identification might not be straightforward. Variation within nominate *excubitor* would have to be taken into account and the separation of *borealis* and *sibiricus* from each other would be particularly difficult. Genetic studies have identified a deep divide between a clade containing (among others) nominate *excubitor* and another containing (among others) *borealis* and *sibiricus* (Olsson 2010).



Andy Stoddart

21. Adult Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica erythrogaster*, Manitoba, Canada, May 2008. Swallows of the widespread Nearctic subspecies *erythrogaster* can be relatively distinctive: the dark breast-band is generally interrupted and confined to breast-side patches, with sometimes a small central breast smudge. This enables the rufous throat to connect with the rich creamy-buff underparts. They also differ in terms of biometrics, being on average shorter-winged than nominate *rustica*. The Nearctic form of Barn Swallow is a potential vagrant to Britain though its identification would be problematic, given that some Eastern Palearctic birds (of the south Siberian subspecies *tytleri* and perhaps also East Asian *gutturalis*) may also show rich buff underparts and lack a complete breast-band. These eastern subspecies (and particularly *gutturalis*) are also short-winged. Intriguingly, genetic studies link *tytleri* with *erythrogaster* (Zink *et al.* 2006), these authors suggesting that the Baikal region of southern Siberia may have been colonised not from within the Palearctic but from North America.

Redstart' *Phoenicurus phoenicurus samamisicus*, Long-tailed Tit *A. c. europaeus*, three Yellow Wagtail taxa *Motacilla flava beema*, *M. f. leucocephala* and *M. f. simillima*, and 'Iceland Redpoll' *Acanthis flammea islandica*.

New subspecies accounts

Subspecies therefore represent a fast-moving target and it has been clear for some time that a full overhaul of the 2006 paper was required. A review was carried out in 2014–15, with new subspecies accounts drafted, incorporating all the developments listed above and reflecting all work in progress with BBRC and BOURC. These will assist the Committee with assessing claims of rare subspecies currently in the system and also inform consideration of future claims. The scope of the new accounts remains the same as in 2006 but each now follows a standard format:

Taxonomy – a description of the current taxonomy, highlighting any debated aspects (e.g. differing treatments, potentially invalid subspecies, proposals for elevation to full species etc.).

Status – a list of the subspecies on the British List, with a brief summary of their status, followed by any subspecies suspected or assumed to occur and any which might have the potential to do so in future.

Identification – brief comments on the problems/issues involved.

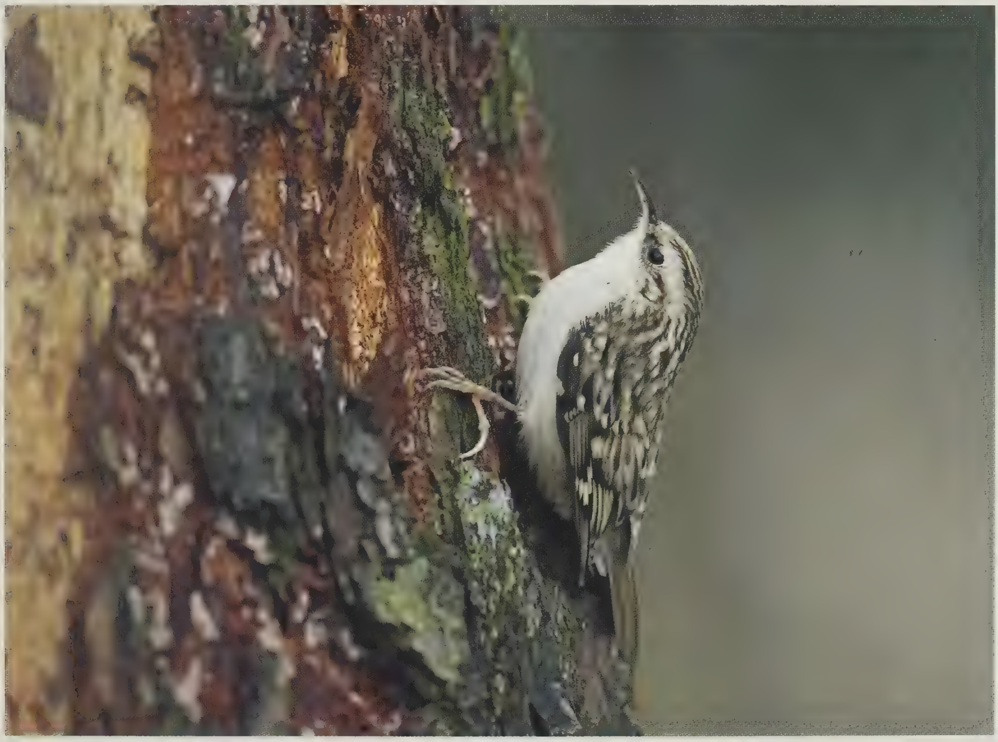
Evidence – the proposed indicative evidence requirements to support any submission.

The accounts are fully referenced and carry a date on which they were last updated. They can be found on the BBRC website (www.bbrc.org.uk) under 'Species Information'. The web-based system will enable these texts to be updated regularly, to reflect the inevitable continuing developments in taxonomy as well as our evolving knowledge of status and identification. All significant updates will be advertised on the BBRC website and Twitter feed @_BBRC and major revisions will also be featured in *BB*.

Subspecies considered

The current review has led to a significant number of changes to the list of subspecies considered by BBRC. In addition to those brought about by taxonomic adjustments, the Committee has made some changes of its own. For example, 'Coues's Arctic Redpoll' *Acanthis hornemanni exilipes*, recently treated as a scarce migrant, is now reinstated as a national rarity at subspecies level, while 'Northern Treecreeper' *Certhia f. familiaris*, listed in the 2006 paper as presumed to be occurring regularly in Britain, is now considered rare enough to be listed.

Three subspecies – European Stonechat *Saxicola r. rubicola*, 'Iceland Redpoll' *A. f. islandica* and Lapland Bunting *Calcarius lapponicus subcalcaratus* – are considered to be occurring regularly in Britain but, owing to



Markus Varesvuo

22. 'Northern Treecreeper' *Certhia f. familiaris*, Finland, November 2003. The published British status of the nominate subspecies of Treecreeper is somewhat contradictory. It is described in the BOU 8th Checklist (BOU 2013) as a scarce migrant, yet Witherby *et al.* (1938–41) listed only four records and it was termed a rare vagrant in Britain in *BWP*, which noted its rarity in the Netherlands and on Helgoland, Germany. In reality it appears to be a genuinely rare late autumn (and sometimes wintering) vagrant to Britain, occurring as part of occasional irruptions out of Scandinavia and with very few confirmed records from eastern coastal counties. Only on Shetland are more occurrences documented but even there it is rare (there were 47 records in Shetland/ Fair Isle to the end of 2014, all considered to be nominate *familiaris*). This subspecies is now therefore considered by BBRC. Its appearance varies but the palest (and presumably more northern or eastern) birds can be very striking. Observers should look for a broad, flaring and strikingly white supercilium extending to the mantle; prominent white spotting in the upperparts; bright white underparts with limited or no buff in the rear flanks; crisp pale wing markings; and a contrastingly bright rump.

taxonomic and identification difficulties, are not on the British List. They are therefore retained in the rare subspecies listing but claims are sought only if accompanied by a ringing recovery. The full background to all these decisions can be found in the relevant account on the BBRC website.

In addition, over 20 subspecies not featured in the 2006 paper are listed for the first time. These include several already accepted by both BBRC and BOURC and admitted to the British List (e.g. 'Asian Red-rumped Swallow' *C. d. daurica/japonica*), several now formally published as 'held' (e.g. 'Black-eared Kite' *Milvus migrans lineatus*), several currently under consideration (e.g. Common Tern *Sterna hirundo longipennis*) and several which have now occurred close to Britain and which might possibly occur here in future (e.g. 'Pacific Eider' *Somateria mollissima v-nigrum*). Any list of potential future additions is of course highly speculative, and the Committee will always remain open to claims of rare subspecies not currently on its radar.

The accounts also indicate whether it might be possible to accept a bird to a single subspecies or to a broader subspecies pair or group. For the most difficult to diagnose and/or clinal subspecies (and particularly in the case of a potential first for Britain) this latter treatment can be more appropriate and has already been adopted by BOURC for, among others, 'Least Tern' *Sternula albifrons antillarum/athalassos/browni* and 'Eastern Black Redstart' *P. o. phoenicuroides/rufiventris/xerophilus*. In these two cases, the first-listed subspecies is the one assumed to have occurred but even though the others are not necessarily regarded as likely vagrants, it has not been possible to exclude them with total confidence.

This can, however, be a difficult judgement call for both BBRC and BOURC and the position set out in the accounts should be regarded purely as a statement of the possible options. Each claim will be assessed on its merits and acceptance to a particular level considered on a case-by-case basis.

Evidence requirements

Key to the consideration of any claim of a rare subspecies is the definition of what might constitute sufficient evidence to prove its identity. Inevitably, the evidence requirements proposed on the website vary significantly. For relatively distinctive subspecies, those with well-understood and apparently non-clinal field characters, detailed notes may suffice. At the opposite end of the spectrum, the most subtle and/or clinal subspecies may be accepted only following DNA analysis. Most fall somewhere in the middle but, in general, more stringent evidence requirements, for example biometrics or a ringing recovery, apply to subspecies than to full species.

The accounts also list a relatively high number of subspecies for which photographic evidence is sought. While acknowledging that there are some problems associated with evaluating images, the Committee's view is that for those subspecies which pose the greatest identification difficulties, supporting photographic evidence is important. Where potential British 'firsts' are involved, this is perhaps vital.

Genetic evidence is not specifically referred to in most of the accounts. The availability and usefulness of this type of evidence varies greatly from subspecies to subspecies and a complete mapping exercise has not been undertaken. Moreover, BBRC's primary focus (and the expertise of its members) is on field (or sometimes 'in the hand') observations. Genetic evidence is therefore referred to only in those cases where it is both available and a genuinely useful indicator and where other types of evidence are difficult to evaluate. DNA analysis has already enabled records of Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia c. cantillans*, 'Eastern Grasshopper Warbler *L. n. straminea/mongolica*' and 'Eastern Yellow Wagtail' *M. f. simillima/plexa/tschutschensis* to be accepted while in the pipeline are claims of Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca halimodendri* and 'Caspian Reed Warbler' *Acrocephalus scirpaceus fuscus*, both of which are supported by DNA. Clearly, DNA will provide a short cut to the identification of some other rare subspecies too.

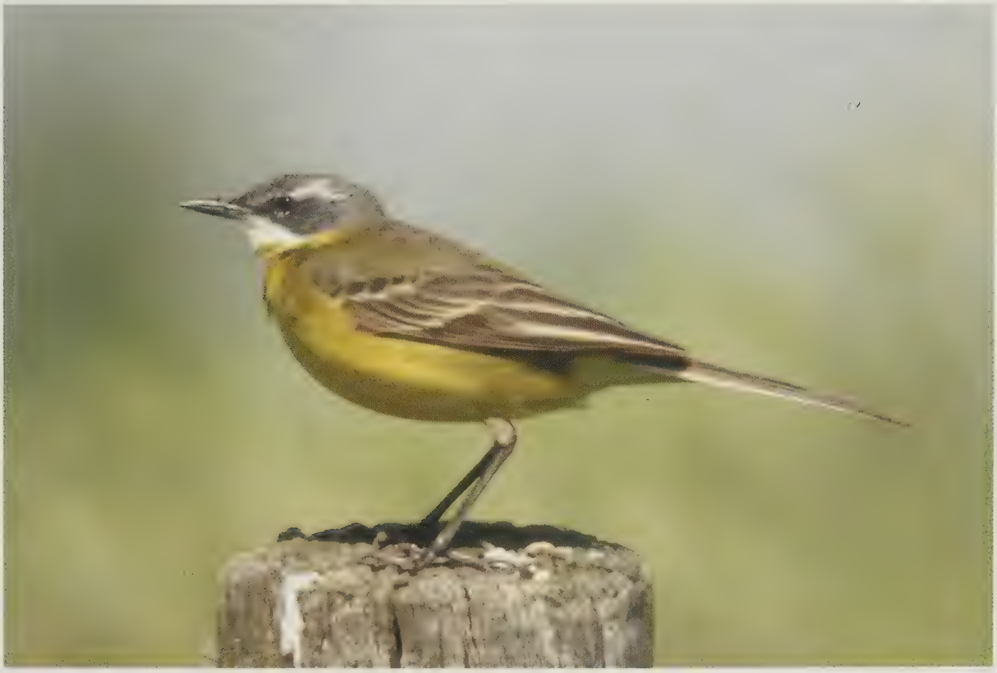
The proposed evidence requirements represent, on current knowledge, the minimum category or categories of evidence considered necessary for a claim to be accepted.

However, additional categories of evidence will always provide a higher standard of documentation and a greater level of proof. Observers are therefore encouraged to secure as many types of evidence as possible (e.g. good photographs or sound recordings as well as detailed notes), while ringers are encouraged to take full biometrics of any suspected rare subspecies and, if relevant, retain any shed material for genetic analysis.

The evidence requirements proposed on the website are intended to assist observers but they should be regarded as indicative only (and BOURC may ultimately apply different criteria in respect of British 'firsts'). They represent the current best assessment of the level of documentation likely to be required to secure acceptance, but they are not set in stone. The requirements will be kept under review and the evidence threshold may be revised in the light of new information, and any advice that may help in this regard is welcomed. All claims will be judged on their merits and good-quality submissions that fall short of what is proposed here are still welcome. These will provide useful reference material and may, as our knowledge improves, ultimately prove acceptable.

Publication

BBRC has previously adopted the concept of 'informal submissions' for rare subspecies, an encouragement to observers to submit claims but also an acknowledgment that the taxonomic and identification issues can be complex and that further research might be required. The Committee has also adopted a policy of not publishing any such claims as 'not proven'. However, as well as facilitating a number of acceptances, this approach has led, perhaps inevitably, to a considerable volume of records that have simply stalled.


Dave Appleton

23. Male 'Spanish Wagtail' *Motacilla flava iberiae*, Portugal, April 2006. Yellow Wagtail of the subspecies *iberiae*, which breeds in southern France, Iberia and northwest Africa, is not yet on the British List but it is a potential vagrant and its occurrence has been suspected. Only males are likely to be identifiable, however. Observers of a possible male *iberiae* should focus on the precise supercilium, ear-covert/eye-ring and throat patterns and, crucially, the call. It is, however, a somewhat variable subspecies and needs to be distinguished from white-throated first-summer male nominate *flava* ('Blue-headed Wagtail') and from the not infrequent intergrades both with this subspecies and with the Italian subspecies *cinereocapilla* ('Ashy-headed Wagtail'). Intergrades with the latter are particularly frequent (resulting in birds with reduced supercilia) and acceptance as '*iberiae/cinereocapilla*' might be most appropriate in such cases. Indeed, these two subspecies are included by some authors within a potential new species, 'White-throated Wagtail' *M. cinereocapilla*.

Some of these are highly promising but just fail to meet the threshold for acceptance while others are not adequately documented or considered not to relate to the subspecies claimed but, under the current policy, cannot be published as 'not proven'. This is not a satisfactory situation.

BBRC Annual Reports now therefore contain an additional Appendix, entitled 'Records held until taxonomy or identification criteria are resolved' (Hudson *et al.* 2015). This lists those claims of rare subspecies (and also full species) which look highly promising but which, through no fault of the observer(s), cannot be progressed on current knowledge. This Appendix is intended to provide greater visibility for such claims and also to facilitate revisiting any claim in the light of new knowledge. Observers' names are not published.

With respect to rare subspecies, this Appendix relates largely to those where the taxonomy is not settled and/or no robust field identification criteria (yet) exist. In many of these cases, identification may ultimately depend on evidence such as biometrics, a ringing recovery or DNA evidence but in some cases ongoing research may result in the definition of field characters too. This Appendix is particularly relevant for claims of 'firsts', where the acceptance threshold is inevitably higher.

To warrant a listing in the Appendix, the evidence supplied must be comprehensive, fully indicative of the claimed identification and contain nothing to suggest otherwise. Claims which are not adequately documented or considered not to relate to the subspecies claimed are published as 'not proven'.

Fuller details of some submissions will be published in *BB* and/or on the BBRC website under the 'From the Rarities Committee's files' banner.

Table of subspecies considered

For ease of reference, a summary table of the rare subspecies (and potential subspecies pairs or groups) considered by BBRC is published here (table 1). In terms of taxonomy, the list follows where relevant the 8th edition of the British List (BOU 2013) and all announcements in Reports 1–11 of the BOU Taxonomic Sub-committee (www.bou.org.uk/british-list/bourc-reports-and-papers). For other taxa, the list follows *BWP* unless stated otherwise. Taxonomy, particularly at subspecies level, is not static and the table here is intended purely as a 'quick guide'. The accounts on the BBRC website should therefore be consulted for a fuller discussion of rival treatments (www.bbrc. org.uk). English names and species order follow the '*British Birds* List of Western Palearctic Birds' (http://britishbirds.co.uk/birding-resources/the-british-birds-list). Vernacular names are used in this paper where there is one in seemingly common usage, but these are omitted from the table.

The table includes a note as to whether each subspecies or subspecies pair/group is on the British List and a code for the proposed indicative evidence requirements. With regard to the latter, it is worth emphasising that the full picture can be complex and that the requirements may vary considerably within each subspecies/pair/group according to sex, age or plumage morph. The evidence codes in the table generally relate to the 'easiest to prove' plumage class only and the full website accounts should always be consulted for the complete picture. Note also that, for the reasons given above, DNA evidence is listed against only a limited number of subspecies for which it is both available and critical to identification. Where multiple categories of evidence are proposed, the codes are not separated (e.g. 'NP') but where the evidence categories are alternatives, the codes are separated by a 'slash' (e.g. 'B/R').

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Table 1. Rare subspecies considered by BBRC. Note: evidence requirement codes are as follows: N = notes, P = photographs, C = call transcription, S = sound recording, B = biometrics or in-hand observation, R = ringing recovery or marked bird, DNA = genetic evidence.
[1] Subspecies not recognised by *BWP*, but see BBRC website, www.bbrc.org.uk

Species	Subspecies/pair/group	On British List?	Indicative evidence requirement
Bewick's Swan *Cygnus columbianus*	*columbianus*	Y	N
Bean Goose *Anser fabalis*	*serrirostris*	N	B/R
	johanseni	N	R
	middendorffii	N	B/R
	johanseni/middendorffii subspecies pair	N	B/R
White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons*	*gambelli*	N	R
	frontalis	N	R
Greylag Goose *Anser anser*	*rubrirostris*	N	B/R
Canada Goose *Branta canadensis*	*interior*	N	B/R
	parvipes	N	B/R
	interior/parvipes subspecies pair	Y	N
Brent Goose *Branta bernicla*	'Grey-bellied Brant' [1]	N	R
Common Eider *Somateria mollissima*	*borealis*	N	B/R
	dresseri	N	NP (adult or near-adult males)
	v-nigrum	N	NP (adult or near-adult males)
Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*	*maroccanus*	N	R
	lucidus	N	R

Species	Subspecies/pair/group	On British List?	Indicative evidence requirement
	maroccanus/lucidus subspecies pair	N	NP (adults)
Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*	*desmarestii*	N	B/R
Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*	*hoactli*	N	NP (adults)
Great White Egret *Ardea alba*	*egretta*	N	B/R
	modesta	N	B/R
Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena*	*holboellii*	Y	B/R
Black Kite *Milvus migrans*	*lineatus*	N	B/R
Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*	*atricapillus*	N	NP (adults)
Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*	*vulpinus*	N	NP (rufous/ dark morphs)
Rough-legged Buzzard *Buteo lagopus*	*sanctijohannis*	N	NP (dark morphs)
Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*	*variegatus*	N	NP
Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*	*orientalis*	N	B/R
Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*	*melanuroides*	N	B/R
Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*	*baueri*	N	NP
Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*	*morinella*	N	B/R
Dunlin *Calidris alpina*	*sakhalina*	N	B/R
	pacifica	N	B/R
	arcticola	N	B/R
	hudsonia	N	B/R
	sakhalina/pacifica/arcticola/ hudsonia subspecies group	N	NP (summer adults)
Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus*	*pallescens*	N	R
Black Guillemot *Cepphus grylle*	*mandtii*	N	NP
	grylle	N	B/R
	islandicus	N	R
	faeroeensis	N	R
	islandicus/faeroeensis subspecies pair	N	B/R
Little Tern *Sternula albifrons*	*antillarum*	N	R
	antillarum/athalassos/browni subspecies group	Y	NC
Black Tern *Chlidonias niger*	*surinamensis*	Y	N
Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*	*longipennis*	N	NP (summer adults)
Common Gull *Larus canus*	*kamtschatschensis*	N	B/R
	brachyrhynchus	N	R
Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*	*fuscus*	Y	NP (second-calendar-year birds)
	heuglini	N	R
	barabensis	N	R
Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis*	*atlantis*	N	NP
Iceland Gull *Larus glaucoides*	*thayeri*	Y	NP
Barn Owl *Tyto alba*	*guttata*	Y	N
Common Swift *Apus apus*	*pekinensis*	N	R
Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*	*pinetorum*	N	B/R
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker *Dryobates minor*	*minor*	N	B/R
Merlin *Falco columbarius*	*columbarius*	N	NP
Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*	*calidus*	N	B/R

Species	Subspecies/pair/group	On British List?	Indicative evidence requirement
	tundrius	N	R
	calidus/*tundrius* subspecies pair	N	NP (juveniles)
Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor*	*homeyeri*	N	NP
	sibiricus	N	R
	borealis	N	R
	sibiricus/*borealis* subspecies pair	N	NP
Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator*	*badius*	Y	N
	niloticus	N	NP
Western Jackdaw *Corvus monedula*	*soemmerringii*	N	R
Crested Tit *Lophophanes cristatus*	*cristatus*	Y	R
	mitratus	Y	R
	cristatus/mitratus subspecies pair	N	NP
Coal Tit *Periparus ater*	*hibernicus*	N	R
Willow Tit *Poecile montana*	*borealis*	Y	NP
Skylark *Alauda arvensis*	*cantarella*	N	R
	dulcivox	N	R
Shore Lark *Eremophila alpestris*	*alpestris*	N	R
	hoyti	N	R
	alpestris/*hoyti et al.* subspecies group	N	R
Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla*	any identifiable subspecies/pair/group	N	R
Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*	*erythrogaster*	N	R
	tytleri	N	R
	gutturalis	N	B/R
	tytleri/*gutturalis* subspecies pair	N	R
	erythrogaster/*tytleri*/*gutturalis* subspecies group	N	NP
	transitiva	N	R
	savignii	N	R
	transitiva/*savignii* subspecies pair	N	R
House Martin *Delichon urbicum*	*lagopodum*	N	NP
Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica*	*daurica*	N	R
	japonica	N	R
	daurica/*japonica* subspecies pair	Y	N
Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*	*orientalis*	N	R
	albiventris	N	B/R
	orientalis/*albiventris* subspecies pair	N	B/R
Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus*	*caudatus*	Y	N
	europaeus	N	R
Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*	*plumbeitarsus*	Y	N
Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*	*yakutensis*	N	B/R
Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca*	*halimodendri*	N	S/R/DNA
	minula	N	S/B/R/DNA
	margelanica	N	S/B/R/DNA
	halimodendri/*minula*/*margelanica* subspecies group	N	NP
Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*	*volgensis*	N	R
	icterops	N	R
	rubicola	N	B/R
	icterops/*rubicola* subspecies pair	N	B/R
Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans*	*iberiae*	Y	R/DNA
	inornata	N	R
	iberiae/*inornata* subspecies pair	Y	N (spring males)
	cantillans	Y	R/DNA
	albistriata	Y	C/B/R/DNA
	cantillans/albistriata subspecies pair	Y	N (spring males)

Species	Subspecies/pair/group	On British List?	Indicative evidence requirement
Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia*	*straminea*	N	R
	mongolica	N	R
	straminea/mongolica subspecies pair	Y	R/DNA
Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*	*fuscus*	N	R/DNA
Eurasian Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris*	*familiaris*	Y	NP
Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*	*poltaratskyi/tauricus et al.* subspecies group	N	R
Dipper *Cinclus cinclus*	*cinclus*	Y	N
	aquaticus	N	R
Ring Ouzel *Turdus torquatus*	*alpestris*	N	NP
Common Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*	*golzii*	Y	B/R
	africana	N	R
	golzii/africana	N	NP
Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*	*namnetum*	N	B/R
	'Spanish Bluethroat'[1]	N	R
	volgae	N	R
	pallidogularis	N	R
	volgae/pallidogularis subspecies pair	N	R
Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca*	*sibirica*	Y	R
	iberiae	N	R
Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*	*phoenicuroides*	N	R
	phoenicuroides/rufiventris/xerophilus subspecies group	Y	N (adult and some first-winter males)
Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*	*samamisicus*	N	NP (males)
European Stonechat *Saxicola rubicola*	*rubicola*	N	R
Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*	*feldegg*	Y	NC
	iberiae	N	NC (males)
	cinereocapilla	Y	NC (males)
	iberiae/cinereocapilla subspecies pair	Y	NC (males)
	beema	N	R
	lutea	N	R
	leucocephala	N	R
	simillima	N	R
	plexa	N	R
	tschutschensis	N	R
	taivana	N	R
	macronyx	N	R
	simillima/plexa/tschutschensis subspecies group	Y	R/DNA
	taivana/macronyx subspecies pair	N	R/DNA
	simillima/plexa/tschutschensis/taivana/ macronyx subspecies group	Y	NS
White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*	*leucopsis*	Y	NP
	subpersonata	N	NP
	ocularis	N	NP
	baicalensis	N	NP
	personata	N	NP
Common Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*	*africana*	N	S/R
	spodiogenys	N	S/R
	africana/spodiogenys subspecies pair	N	NP (males)
Common Redpoll *Acanthis flammea*	*islandica*	N	R
Arctic Redpoll *Acanthis hornemanni*	*hornemanni*	Y	N
	exilipes	Y	N
Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*	*vlasowae*	N	R
Lapland Bunting *Calcarius lapponicus*	*subcalcaratus*	N	R

Obituary

Arthur Edward Smith (1920–2015)

Ted Smith, who died in September 2015 at the age of 95, 'made the biggest single contribution to the Wildlife Trusts movement', according to his old friend and colleague Sir David Attenborough.

Born in the sleepy Lincolnshire market town of Alford, in August 1920, Ted grew up in a wildlife-rich rural environment. He explored the area, initially delivering freshly baked bread in a wheelbarrow for his parents (who ran a bakery and grocers), later armed with some cheap binoculars and a copy of Coward's *The Birds of the British Isles.* He studied at Leeds University, where he gained an MA in English, and (after teaching English in Leeds and then Norfolk) returned home to Lincolnshire in 1948, and a job as a tutor in adult education. He found that much had changed, and that familiar landscapes were disappearing as agricultural intensification continued. And he realised that action to preserve what remained was essential.

One of the first priorities was an agreement with Lincolnshire County Council to create a nature reserve at Gibraltar Point, and head off the prospect of a monster caravan park on the site. Ahead of his time, Smith believed that a reserve should involve people as well as wildlife: 'The idea that reserves were for people as well as wildlife was a new concept,' he said. 'In those days you put a fence around it and kept people out. That was totally self-defeating in the end.' Signs to warn people just where the wildlife was were put up (see plate 24) and, in due course, the visitors arrived in their thousands – more than 150,000 in 1966. Having drawn up plans to designate and manage the site as a local nature reserve, Smith persuaded the Council that the newly formed Lincolnshire Naturalists' Trust (he was the founding Honorary Secretary) was the organisation to administer it. The creation of a bird observatory, following a visit to Skokholm in May 1948, was another part of his vision for the site.

As well as Gibraltar Point, the loss of heathlands and flower meadows were two other focal points for the fledgling Lincolnshire Trust in those early days, while saving woodland and coastal habitats were not far behind. Well aware that the more people he united in the cause, the more impact the wildlife trust movement would have, Ted set out to promote his idea for a network of county-based trusts. He was lecturing on the subject as early as 1954, and his efforts over the next two decades were tireless, inspiring, encouraging and coordinating. In 1962 alone he travelled to 11 counties with advice and examples on setting up the necessary organisational structure and by the end of that year there were 30 Trusts in existence. He became Hon. Secretary of the Society for the Promotion of Nature Reserves

Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust

24. Ted Smith (centre) at Gibraltar Point, Lincolnshire, in 1960, with Max (E. M.) Nicholson.

in 1963 and was responsible for much of the growth that saw that body transformed into the modern Wildlife Trusts movement, with 47 mostly flourishing Trusts, more than 800,000 members and around 2,300 reserves.

Ted left his day job to become a full-time Secretary of the Wildlife Trusts in 1975. He served as Chairman and then President of the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust until his death, and remained an active force in the county until well into his nineties. In 2010, Gibraltar Point was dedicated to him in recognition of a lifetime's achievement as a 'Trustee for Nature' and his commitment to the reserve; and in 2012, he received the Wildlife Trusts' Centenary Award, in recognition of his towering contribution to nature conservation in the UK. He was awarded an OBE in 1963 for his work in establishing nature reserves, in Lincolnshire and elsewhere; and he was made a CBE for his services to conservation in 1998.

I knew Ted Smith for almost all of my life. He lived in the same Lincolnshire village as my parents, and he picked up on my early interest in birds and encouraged it in perhaps a rather similar fashion to his approach to conservation generally – in a very quiet and (mostly) undemonstrative way, yet one that was hard to ignore and was undoubtedly effective. He was as determined as he was diplomatic and, most of all I think, he always seemed to understand exactly what was required in a situation and how best to approach it. Like him, I visited Gibraltar Point as a youngster on a bike, and I suspect that we were mesmerised by the place in somewhat similar ways. He taught me quite a lot about birds, but encouraged me to get on and do more on my own – while birds were important to Ted, the wider picture was always his main focus.

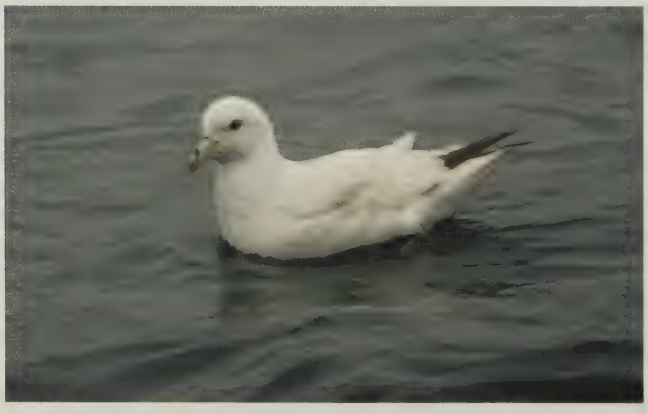
Ted Smith was predeceased by Mary, his wife of almost 60 years, who died in 2008, and he is survived by his daughters Alison and Helen, and by two grandchildren, Alice and James.

Roger Riddington

Notes

Pacific Fulmars in the Bering Sea in summer 2015

This note summarises observations of Pacific Fulmars *Fulmarus glacialis rodgersii* during a recent expedition cruise on the Bering Sea, which are relevant to the discussion in Flood & van Grouw (2015). From 30th June to 7th July 2015 we sailed from Dutch Harbour, Unalaska, to St Paul Island (Pribilofs), continuing to the rarely visited St Matthew and Hall Islands (including Pinnacle Rock), returning to St Paul Island via Zhemchug Canyon (c. 300 km southwest of St Matthew Island at 58°N 174.5°E). Approximately 18,000–20,000 Pacific Fulmars were seen and the morph composition was noted (table 1).


Scott Schuette

25. A LLL Pacific Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis rodgersii*, Zhemchug Canyon, Bering Sea, 5th June 2015. This Fulmar is snowy white with only a narrow grey saddle at the top of the mantle, just visible in the photograph. Faint yellowish/brownish marks on the white feathers are probably stains.

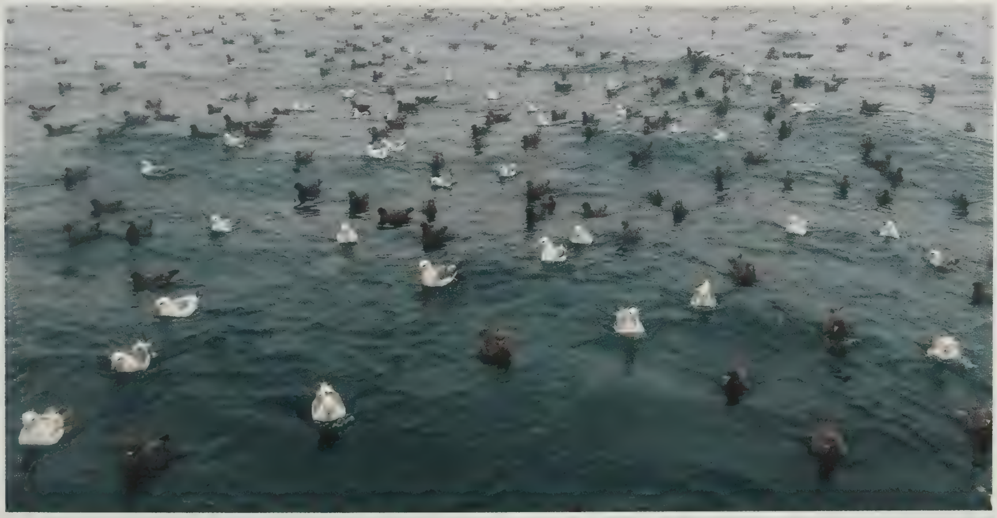
Vagrancy to the Atlantic

Flood & van Grouw (2015) concluded that a vagrant Pacific Fulmar in the Atlantic would most probably be a light

Table 1. Approximate counts and morph composition of Pacific Fulmars *Fulmarus glacialis rodgersii* seen in the Bering Sea, June–July 2015. Morphs are categorised as dark (DDD/DD), intermediate (D/L) and light (LL/LLL).

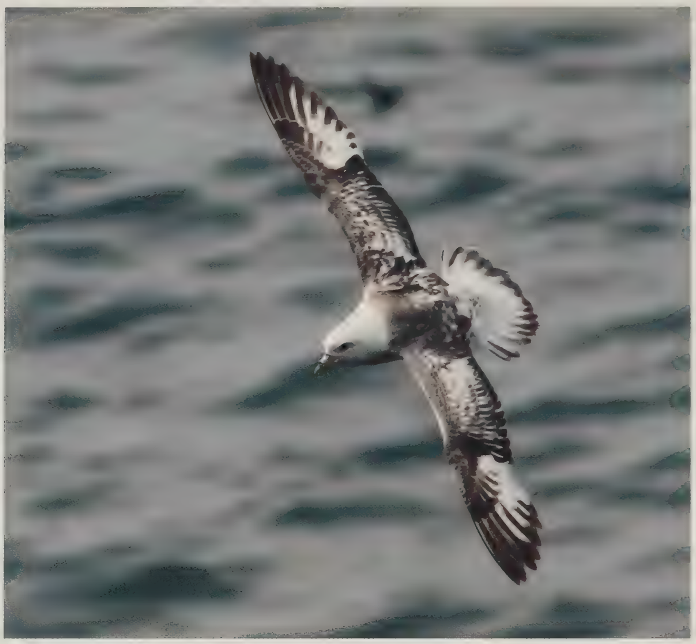
Date	Location	n	% dark	% intermediate	% light
30th June	08.30–12.00, local cruise Dutch Harbour	100	100%	0%	0%
	12.00–21.00, Dutch Harbour to St Paul Is	500	99.5%	0%	2 birds
1st July	07.00–12.00, Dutch Harbour to St Paul Is	1,000	95%	a few	5%
	12.00–16.00, Dutch Harbour to St Paul Is	1,000	90%	a few	10%
	16.00–18.00, arrive St Paul Is	500	50%	a few	50%
	21.00 depart for St Matthew Is				
2nd July	07.00–12.00, St Paul Is to St Matthew Is	1,000	80%	a few	20%
	12.00–16.00, St Paul Is to St Matthew Is	1,500	30%	a few	70%
3rd July	04.00, arrive St Matthew Is, several landings	250	0%	0%	100%
4th July	08.00–12.00, cruise Hall Is & Pinnacle Rock	3,000	a few	a few	99.5%
	12.00–21.00, head SW to Zhemchug Canyon	1,000	50–75%	a few	25–50%
5th July	07.00–17.00, chumming Zhemchug Canyon	3,000–5,000	70–75%	2%	25–30%
	17.00–21.00, depart SE to St Paul Is	1,000	70–75%	a few	25–30%
6th July	07.00–21.00, St Matthew Is to St Paul Is	2,000	80%	a few	20%
7th July	07.00–15.00, St Matthew Is to St Paul Is	1,500	80%	a few	20%
	15.00–17.00, arrive St Paul Is	500	50–80%	a few	20–50%

morph, since the closest breeding colonies to the Atlantic (on St Matthew and Hall Islands, including Pinnacle Rock) are substantial in size and 100% light morph (Hatch & Nettleship 1998). We noted during the expedition that most of them were LL, some were lighter, and about 2% were LLL (plate 25). However, observations at sea showed that dark-morph Pacific Fulmars are common in the North Bering Sea not far from breeding colonies (table 1, plate 26) and so a vagrant dark morph is at least as likely to occur as a vagrant light morph (intermediate morphs were quite rare). The origins of the dark-



Andrew Holman

26. Pacific Fulmars *Fulmarus glacialis rodgersii*, Zhemchug Canyon, Bering Sea, 5th July 2015. Roughly 70–75% of Fulmars seen during the expedition at Zhemchug Canyon in the North Bering Sea were dark morph; 20–25% were light morph and just 2% were intermediates.



27. A LL Pacific Fulmar, St Paul Island, Bering Sea, 5th June 2015. A small number of light-morph birds seen in the eastern sector of the Bering Sea had a tail-band that was just 20% of the length of the tail.

Scott Schuette

morph fulmars could be the Aleutian chain or the Russian sector of the Bering Sea (e.g. the Commander Islands).

Dark nasal tubes

Flood & van Grouw (2015) noted that the nasal tubes are commonly dark (blackish) on Atlantic Fulmar *F. g. glacialis*, especially darker birds, but rarely if ever dark on Pacific Fulmar. Many Fulmars were checked during the Bering Sea expedition and none of them had dark nasal tubes.

Dark distal tail-bands

Most Pacific Fulmars have a dark tail that contrasts with paler uppertail-coverts, while a small number show a dark distal tail-band, some 80% or more of the length of the tail (Hatch & Nettleship 1998). However, in the Bering Sea a small number of light-morph birds were seen with a dark distal tail-band covering just 20% of the length of the tail (plate 27). These fulmars resemble the Atlantic Fulmars with a short dark distal tail-band observed in Svalbard in 2014, although the latter population is largely composed of intermediate morphs. Of incidental interest, a few anomalous Pacific Fulmars included a DD bird with a cream-coloured tail and several LL/LLL birds with a wholly whitish tail.

Pribilof breeders

Hatch & Nettleship (1998) estimated that 0.2% of breeding Pacific Fulmars in the Pribilofs are dark morph. However, on St Paul Island, Scott Schuette (*in litt.*) noted that, in the last six breeding seasons, 1–3% are intermediate morph and a similar percentage are dark morph.

Acknowledgments

I wish to thank John Puschock of Zugunruhe Birding Tours; captain Billy Choate, first mate Paula Faiferman and chéf Nicole Arevalo of MV *Pŭk-ŭk*; Scott Schuette for information about the Fulmars of the Pribilofs; and Hein van Grouw for comments on plate 25.

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Grey Heron carrying a rat in its feet

On 21st March 2015, while I was carrying out a survey of Otters *Lutra lutra* at the Suffolk Wildlife Trust reserve of Snape Marshes, a Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* took off some 50 m or so in front of me, carrying something in its feet. My colleague and I both focused our binoculars on it and saw that the heron was carrying a large, dead rat. It took off from the grazing marsh, flew over the river wall and disappeared across the Alde Estuary. I've often seen herons carrying nesting material in their beaks, but never carrying anything in their feet, and can find nothing similar in the literature. It is possible that we disturbed the bird, which flew off in a panic with the mammal in its feet rather than in its bill.

Acknowledgment

Thanks to John Marchant for his comments, and for encouraging the submission of this note.

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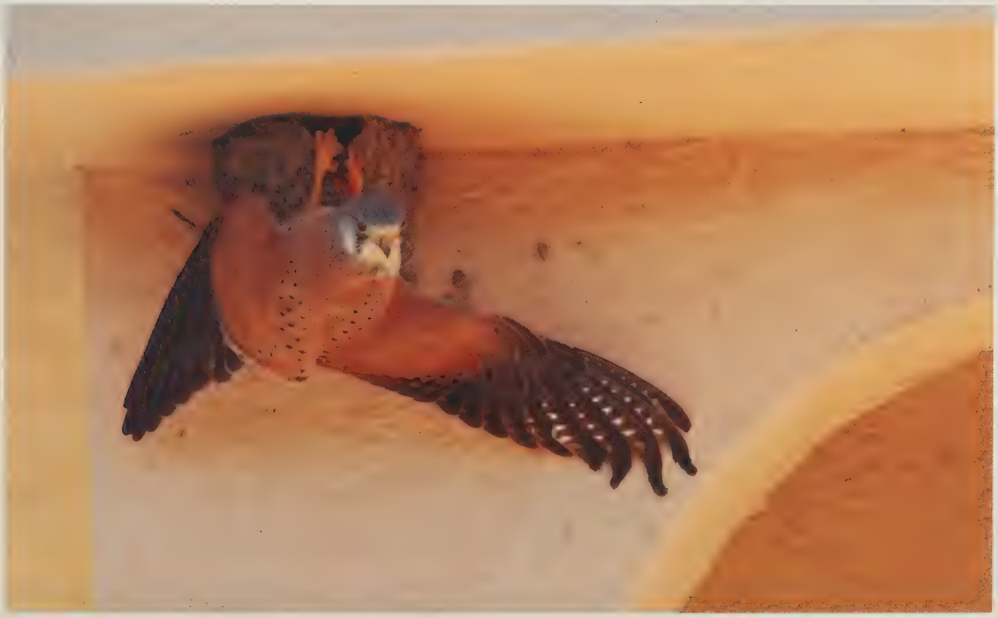
Editorial comment This does seem a most unusual occurrence; herons are clearly not built to carry anything sizeable in their feet and it is possible that in this case the rat may have been entangled in some way in the heron's feet – in combination with the surprise element, that may have caused the situation that Derek Walduck observed. We would be interested to receive any similar observations.

Common Kestrel attempting to predate House Martin nest

On 21st April 2015, in Sardinia, I observed a male Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* displaying what I thought was unusual behaviour. The Kestrel landed on the nest of a House Martin *Delichon urbicum* situated under the eaves of a roof. It then proceeded to inspect the nest through the hole entrance (plate 28). I assumed that it was too early for eggs/chicks, and I did not see the falcon take an adult House Martin from the nest. The Kestrel flew to and from the nest five times over a matter of minutes.

David Rich, 52 Heol West Plas, Coity, Bridgend CF35 6BA; e-mail davidrich52@btinternet.com

Editorial comment Similar behaviour has been reported before (*Brit. Birds* 85: 188), but the photographic evidence in this case seemed worth publishing. Furthermore, we recently published a note describing attempted predation by a Common Kestrel at a House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* nestbox (*Brit. Birds* 106: 412–413).

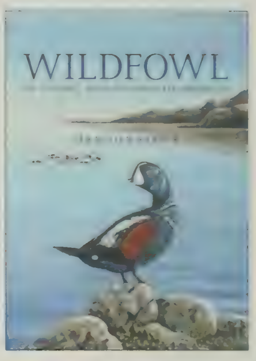

David Rich

28. Male Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* at House Martin *Delichon urbicum* nest, Sardinia, April 2015.

Reviews

Wildfowl of Europe, Asia and North America

By Sébastien Reeber
Christopher Helm/Bloomsbury, 2015
Hbk, 656pp; 72 colour plates, 650 colour photos, distribution maps, black-and-white illustrations
ISBN 978-1-4729-1234-3, **Wild Sounds price £31.99,** quote BB091



This impressive volume covers the identification and ageing of 83 species of ducks, geese and swans that breed in North America, Europe and Asia. In essence it deals with all the species that occur regularly in the entire Holarctic region, including the probably extinct Crested Shelduck *Tadorna cristata*. Not included are a few breeding species from southern Asia such as Wandering Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna arcuata*, Sunda *Anas gibberifrons* and Andaman Teals *A. albogularis* and the possibly extinct Pink-headed Duck *Rhodonessa caryophyllacea*. These species, a small number of vagrants to the region and others that have occurred only as escapes from captivity were covered in Madge and Burn's *Wildfowl: an identification guide to the ducks, geese and swans of the world* (Helm, 1988). Compared with the earlier volume, the reduced geographical scope of the present guide allows for a much more detailed treatment of each species. This incorporates numerous new insights into identification and taxonomy and several recently elevated species are fully covered for the first time. The vexing subject of hybridisation is examined in far greater detail than previously.

An introduction covers general topics such as taxonomy and systematics, topography, ageing and sexing, but all with a particular emphasis on wildfowl. There are extended sections on hybridisation and on the rationale behind the terminology used to describe plumages and moult.

About one-third of the book is devoted to the presentation of 72 identification plates, with captions and distribution maps on the facing page. The illustrations are of a high standard and constitute a comprehensive catalogue of the appearance of each species in all plumages and include numerous variations. Furthermore, a large number of known hybrid combinations are also depicted, with a particular emphasis on those that represent significant identification pitfalls. For example, in total there are paintings of four males and one female Eurasian *A. penelope* × American Wigeon *A. americana* hybrids plus two male backcrosses (one to each species), as well as depictions of both male and female Eurasian × Chiloe Wigeon *A. sibilatrix* crosses and a further eight hybrid combinations involving Wigeons.

The remainder of the book examines each species in even greater detail, covering taxonomy (including contrasting views), general identification and ageing characters, detailed descriptions of each age category and plumage (including illustrations of feather patterns and shapes useful in ageing for some species or groups), moult strategy, geographical variation, biometrics, voice, hybridisation (especially in the wild), habitat preferences and lifestyle characteristics, range and population (including threat status) and status in captivity (covering prevalence, ease of maintenance and breeding, and even price – a key consideration in relation to knotty problems of provenance). At the end of each species account the most important references are listed, while a comprehensive list of all references runs to almost 1,400 entries. All in all this adds up to a very comprehensive examination of each species, which is further complemented by the inclusion of numerous high-quality colour photographs (all of birds in the wild) with captions that further clarify key identification and ageing characteristics.

Forms recently elevated to species status by at least some major taxonomic bodies are treated as such, including, for example, Eurasian *A. crecca* and Green-winged Teal *A. carolinensis*, Common *Melanitta nigra* and Black Scoter *M. americana* – in each case with details of the latest thinking on the separation of birds in less distinctive plumages. In this sense it is a major advance on some previous guides.

The English names used and taxonomy followed are relatively familiar and traditional, no novel taxonomic treatments are adopted and

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alternative English names are indicated as appropriate. Less familiar, at least to many readers outside North America, will be the plumage and moult terminology used. This follows a recently modified version of the Humphrey and Parkes (H-P) system, a bold move by the author. The H-P system aims at a universal language for moult and plumages; it irons out terminological ambiguities, for example by distinguishing between a particular plumage and the age of the bird wearing it (they do not always coincide) and anachronisms such as the fact that many ducks wear so-called breeding plumage only during the non-breeding season. The chief benefit of the H-P system, though, is that it better identifies fundamental patterns that other terminologies either ignore or even conceal. This is an identification guide rather than a treatise on moult, of course, but given the complexities of plumage development and seasonal changes in many wildfowl, some of which remain unresolved, the H-P system seems, on balance, the most fitting terminology to use. Wisely, though, the author often also incorporates some more familiar terms as signposts (though these are not actually equivalents of the H-P terms), so hopefully it will not be necessary to return constantly to the introduction for guidance until the new terminology starts to sink in. Even so, I imagine that the routine use of terms such as formative and definitive, basic and alternate will prove unpopular with more casual readers. Conversely, those with a deeper interest in the intricacies of moult and identification may find its use here an excellent introduction to the practical application and advantages of the H-P system.

All in all, this book represents by far the most thorough guide to the identification and ageing of Holarctic wildfowl. It should become the essential first reference for anyone with an interest in these birds.

Chris Kehoe

Swallow

By Angela Turner
Reaktion Books Ltd, 2015
Pbk, 208pp; many colour and black-and-white illustrations
ISBN 978-1-78023-491-5, **Wild Sounds price £12.95**

This small volume is a new addition to a rapidly expanding series, each book exploring the cultural and natural histories of a well-known group of animals, including, among the birds, *Albatross*, *Owl*, *Swan*, *Duck* and *Vulture*. That should be enough of a clue that the current book is not specifically about the Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* even if, as might be expected from this author, that species gets its fair share of attention. The House Martin *Delichon urbicum* and Purple Martin *Progne subis* also feature prominently given their close association with people (and their dwellings) in Europe and North America respectively.

There are some fascinating insights into the natural history of hirundines but the book focuses primarily on human relationships and interactions with these birds. I was reminded that the long-standing belief that swallows hibernated in the mud at the bottom of rivers and ponds was backed up by numerous apparent 'eyewitness' accounts that seemed to confirm the behaviour beyond any reasonable doubt. It was only through rigorous experiments that the truth was established, though the ones involving forced immersion would no doubt fall foul of today's scientific ethics committees.

There are interesting sections describing the use of hirundines as sentinel species for pollution monitoring (including around Chernobyl), as indicators of the effects of climate change and as beneficial companions around our homes – hoovering up pesky flying insects and even warning when predators threaten domestic poultry through their noisy aerial mobbing. Personally, I was less keen on the sections on swallows in art, mythology and folklore, although others will no doubt find them interesting and entertaining. These aspects are what help to set this series apart from more traditional monographs, though they make up a relatively small proportion of the current book.

Ian Carter

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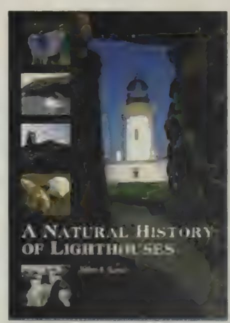
A Natural History of Lighthouses

By John A. Love
Whittles Publishing, 2015
Hbk, 293pp; many colour photographs
ISBN 978-1-84995-154-8, **Wild Sounds price £30.00**



Exposed headlands and islands with lighthouses are among the top locations for seeing migrant landbirds and for seawatching, and the bright lamps formerly attracted large numbers of nocturnal passerines, often causing fatalities on a staggering scale. Light stations and their keepers played key roles in the early study of bird migration in Britain and Ireland. In response to questionnaires sent out by Harvie-Brown in Scotland, Cordeaux in England and Barrington in Ireland, the keepers provided the core data for a vast survey that ran throughout much of the 1880s (longer in Ireland).

John Love's *A Natural History of Lighthouses* gives a leisurely history of the development of lighthouses around (mainly) the British coasts, with excellent photographs, mostly by the author, of scores of lighthouses including some so remote that only the most dedicated enthusiast would ever get to see them. Sadly, only two of the hundreds of images show a view inside a lighthouse, and neither gives any impression of either the operation of a light mechanism or the cramped living and working conditions that the keepers had to endure. The Stevenson dynasty, responsible for more than a few of our lighthouses, is well documented and the author recounts many tales of human history, sometimes in the form of heroic drama.

The book, however, has a misleading title – just four chapters are devoted to natural history. Chapter 6 comprises excerpts from the diary of a keeper on the Bell Rock; chapter 11 reworks the Harvie-Brown/Cordeaux migration study; chapter 12 talks about bird strikes and briefly summarises the founding of some bird observatories. A few pages in chapter 10 skim over other animal life. Lighthouse sites take in bold geological exposures, stunted halophilic plant communities and varied marine environments as well as a range of creepy commensals, but these are not covered and the ornithology is mainly historical, with little of what we now know about migration or coastal ecology. Malcolm Williams's seawatching at Rattray gets mentioned, but neither his Steller's Eider *Polysticta stelleri* in November 1970 nor Britain's first Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius*, which the keeper tried to sustain on Skerryvore in June 1985, are included. Nor is there any mention that returns continued to be collected from lighthouses well into the twentieth century (many now held in the library of the Scottish Ornithologists' Club).

This is a nicely produced book but careful editing might have removed some of the repetition, including a rather similar opening sentence to the first two chapters, got the height of the Flannans light sorted (pp. 4, 14) and maybe removed the 'N' word from page 63. An index and bibliography would also have been useful.

Alan Knox

Nests, Eggs and Incubation

Edited by D. C. Deeming and S. J. Reynolds; Oxford University Press, 2015; hbk, 296pp; numerous black-and-white and 15 colour illustrations
ISBN 978-0-19-871866-6, **Wild Sounds price £59.99**

This book brings together a team of leading authorities to provide a comprehensive overview of the field of avian reproduction. Starting with a new assessment of the evolution of avian reproductive biology in light of recent research, the book goes on to cover four broad areas: the nest, the egg, incubation, and the study of avian reproduction. Applied chapters describe how biological knowledge can be applied to challenges such as urbanisation and climate change.

The Birdwatcher's Yearbook 2016

Edited by Neil Gartshore; Calluna Books, 2015; pbk, 328pp
ISBN 978-0-9933477-0-2, **£19.50**
Under new management, but the format of this 36th edition is comfortingly familiar.

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Recent reports

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Harry Hussey

This summary of unchecked reports covers early November to early December 2015.

Headlines A mild, wet and stormy November ushered in a relatively quiet period for rarities, which featured quality over variety. Highlights included an American Bittern in Co. Cork, a Black Scoter in Co. Kerry and an Oriental Turtle Dove in Shetland. More predictably, a Laughing Gull was seen on Scilly and the Pacific Diver returned to the Cornish coast for its ninth winter. The only Desert Wheatear of the autumn appeared in Cumbria while the Crag Martin reappeared and lingered in Derbyshire. A Pallid Harrier appears set to spend the winter in Norfolk and another appeared briefly in Cleveland. Good numbers of storm-blown seabirds kept the interest going; in addition to those mentioned below there were widespread sightings of Great Northern *Gavia immer* and Black-throated Divers *G. arctica*, Long-tailed Ducks *Clangula hyemalis*, Smews *Mergellus albellus* and Pomarine Skuas *Stercorarius skua*.

Canada Goose ***Branta canadensis*** Lissadell (Co. Sligo), race *interior*, 17th–21st November. **Cackling Goose** ***Branta hutchinsii*** Exe Estuary (Devon), long-stayer to 14th November; also West Freugh Airfield (Dumfries & Galloway), 13th November to 5th December; Lower Test Marshes, 10th November and Redbridge (both Hampshire), 16th–20th November; Port Ellen, Islay (Argyll), 15th November; Loch of Skene (North-east Scotland), 19th November. **American Wigeon** ***Anas americana*** Records from Argyll (two), Highland (two), North-east Scotland, Outer Hebrides and Co. Wexford. **Ferruginous Duck** ***Aythya nyroca*** Records from Berkshire, Co. Durham, Greater London and Hampshire. **Lesser Scaup** ***Aythya affinis*** Records from Argyll, Avon (long-stayer), Gloucestershire, Co. Kerry (two, together at Lough Gill), Perth & Kinross, Scilly and Shetland. **Black Scoter** ***Melanitta americana*** Waterville (Co. Kerry), 26th–27th November. **Surf Scoter** ***Melanitta perspicillata*** Records from Cleveland, Denbighshire, Fife, Kent, Lothian, Northumberland, Orkney, Outer Hebrides and Somerset.

Pacific Diver ***Gavia pacifica*** Marazion/Penzance (Cornwall), returning individual, 26th November to 6th December. **American Bittern** ***Botaurus lentiginosus*** Castlefreke (Co. Cork), 25th–27th November and 3rd–6th December. **Cattle Egret** ***Bubulcus ibis*** Long-stayers in Devon (at least three), Somerset (two) and Co. Wexford; new arrivals in Cornwall, Gwent (two), Lancashire & N Merseyside and Norfolk. **Glossy Ibis** ***Plegadis falcinellus*** Long-stayers Devon, Essex, Gloucestershire, Somerset and Co. Waterford; new arrivals Co. Armagh, Co. Derry (three), Devon (second bird), Co. Meath, Norfolk and Sussex.

White-tailed Eagle ***Haliaeetus albicilla*** Great Eggleshope Beck (Co. Durham), 6th December. **Northern Harrier** ***Circus hudsonius*** North Ronaldsay (Orkney), long-stayer to 30th November; Newcastle (Co. Wicklow), 19th November to 5th December. **Pallid Harrier** ***Circus macrourus*** Titchwell, 12th November, perhaps same Warham Greens, 15th–17th, East Hills, 16th and Snettisham (all Norfolk), 17th November to 7th December; Seaton Snook (Cleveland), 12th November.

John Murphy

29. American Bittern *Botaurus lentiginosus*, Castlefreke, Co. Cork, November 2015.

Roger Riddington

30. First-winter Oriental Turtle Dove *Streptopelia orientalis*, Scalloway, Shetland, November 2015.

American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica* Long-stayers Torness (Lothian), to 9th November, and South Uist (Outer Hebrides) to 10th November; also Goole Fields (Yorkshire), 25th November. **White-rumped Sandpiper** *Calidris fuscicollis* Musselburgh (Lothian), 12th–14th November. **Spotted Sandpiper** *Actitis macularius* Pilmore (Co. Cork), 22nd November to 6th December. **Greater Yellowlegs** *Tringa melanoleuca* Whippingham (Isle of Wight), long-stayer to 3rd December. **Long-billed Dowitcher** *Limnodromus scolopaceus* Long-stayers Rogerstown (Co. Dublin), to 10th November, and Pennington Marshes (Hampshire), 23rd November and 4th December; also, Cresswell Pond (Northumberland), 9th November to 6th December; Killorglin (Co. Kerry), 11th November.

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica* Blennerville (Co. Kerry), long-stayer to 27th November. **Forster's Tern** *Sterna forsteri* Kinvarra, 15th November, same Mutton Island (both Co. Galway), 21st November, and New Quay (Co. Clare), 29th November and 6th December. **Bonaparte's Gull** *Chroicocephalus philadelphia* Dawlish Warren/Exe Estuary (Devon), long-stayer to 28th November; Rusheen Bay (Co. Galway), 13th November; Farne Islands, 23rd and 29th November, same Seahouses (Northumberland), 23rd November. **Laughing Gull** *Larus atricilla* St Martin's (Scilly), 17th–18th November. **American Herring Gull** *Larus smithsonianus* St Just (Cornwall), long-stayer again 16th November; Tralee Bay Wetlands Centre (Co. Kerry), 19th November.

Oriental Turtle Dove *Streptopelia orientalis* Scalloway (Shetland), 25th November to 5th December. **Pallid Swift** *Apus pallidus* Margate (Kent), 9th November and 7th December. **Gyr Falcon** *Falco rusticolus* Forss (Highland), found dead, 19th November; South Uist, 6th December.

Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus* Lytchett Bay, two, 22nd November, then Longham Lakes (both Dorset), two, 22nd–24th November; Titchfield Haven (Hampshire), three, 7th December. **Crag Martin** *Ptyonoprogne rupestris* Chesterfield (Derbyshire), long-stayer to 19th November. **Dusky Warbler** *Phylloscopus fuscatus* Dungeness (Kent), 16th–20th November. **Rose-coloured Starling** *Pastor roseus* Tewkesbury (Gloucestershire), long-stayer to 11th November; Howth (Co. Dublin), 17th–23rd November. **Desert Wheatear** *Oenanthe deserti* Eskmeals (Cumbria), 16th–19th November. **Olive-backed Pipit** *Anthus hodgsoni* Hayling Island (Hampshire), 12th November. **Arctic Redpoll** *Acanthis hornemanni* Lanesborough (Co. Longford), 19th November.

Notable records of commoner species

Great Skua *Stercorarius skua* Strong movement along east-facing coasts on 21st November, including 191 Titchwell, 182 Holme (both Norfolk), 168 Swalecliffe and 70 Shell Ness (both Kent). **Little Auk** *Alle alle* Counts on 21st November including 602 Farne Islands, 584 Craister, 328 Seaton Sluice (all Northumberland) and 312 Whitburn (Co. Durham). **Mediterranean Gull** *Larus melanocephalus* Weymouth (Dorset), roost count of 950, 12th November. **Wood Pigeon** *Columba palumbus* Christchurch Harbour (Dorset), 105,300 over by 10.00 hrs on 22nd November, also 50,000 over on 23rd. **Siskin** *Spinus spinus* At Spurn (Yorkshire), 1,078 over on 10th, 466 on 11th and 273 on 12th November.

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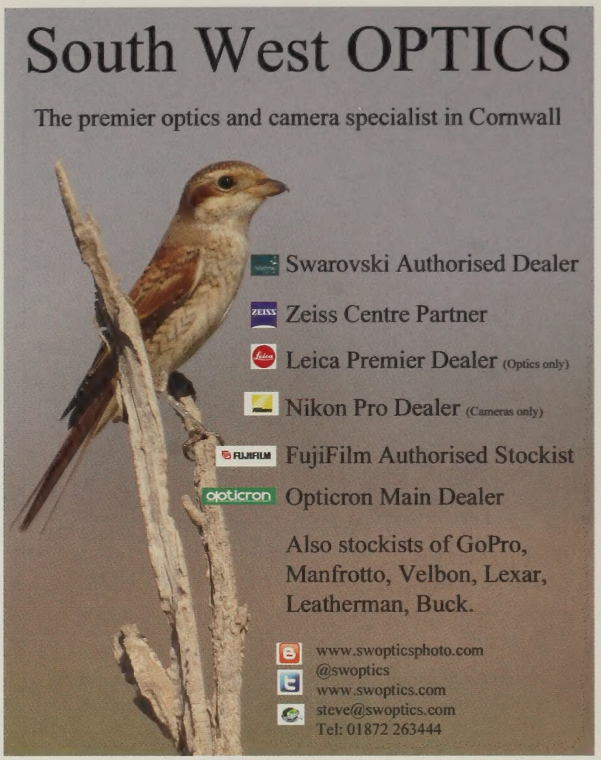

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